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MODERN TENDENCIES
AND
OLD STANDARDS
IN
MUSICAL ART

BY

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"The Art of Teaching Piano Playing," etc.

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I.

The True Significance of Absolute Music.

A MOTORING friend of mine, a man who knew little or nothing of music, and whose acquaintances knew as little as he did, got a gramophone for his own and their edification. One of his records was a piano composition of Liszt played by Backhaus; and he could make nothing of it. Simple songs he could follow the drift of; but this piano music was "double Dutch" to him. So, anxious to learn, he put the question to me: "Now, can you tell me in a few words, what is the *point* of music? Many, many times has this self-same question been put, both by those who are ignorant and by those who are skilled in music. And to the question the answers have been so varied and so contradictory that there appears to be no end to the feud which exists between the musical philosophers of

opposing schools. It was not, therefore, easy to answer my friend in a few words.

There is little doubt that music is, of all the arts, the least understood. It is the youngest of the arts; its symbolism is one to which we are far less accustomed from the days of our childhood than that of any other branch of art; and its significance is less material and tangible than is the significance of most of those things with which we have familiarly to do.

WHAT ABSOLUTE MUSIC DOES NOT MEAN.

To my friend the motorist; to the average practical man of affairs whose chief concerns are with the business of life, who attends his concerts as one of the respectable pleasures of life, who knows more of the plain facts of the world as they are to be seen through the "gate of horn" than of the ideal dreams of beauty which come through the "gate of ivory"; and also to many of those who "profess and call themselves" musicians; music is a concourse of sweet and pleasant sounds which fall soothingly upon the ears, but which have no effect beyond what is purely sensuous; which convey, not an impression, but only a fleeting sensation without power and without value. The real music of the world is something beyond this.

Then there is an influential school of philosophers who affirm that the object of music is to depict or portray something—some scene, some story, some action, some group of feelings and impressions; and that this something which it is the business of music to portray can be translated into words. According to their doctrine music tells a tale, and that tale might just as well be told in the more intelligible form of words. They say that the composer meant to express the tale they tell; and that if he did not explain the matter, it is their duty to explain it, so that the hearers may know what it is all about. Now, it is a curious thing that these philosophers and the simple, ignorant man, my friend the motorist, meet here on common ground. Both of them are not at all content to hear the music, they are not content to admire what is beautiful; they are so accustomed to the accounts of actions, the pictures of scenes, that they cannot believe music to be a complete thing in itself. They cannot make it a tangible reality for themselves without their "programme." Its spirituality is too subtly illusive; it evanesces while they listen. Music for them without their matter-of-fact account of its programmatic meaning, is a sort of shadowy ghost which vanishes as you try to hold it in your grasp.

I have often thought that it would be an interesting experiment for these philosophers of musical

programmes to make out their detailed programmes for a number of pieces of music; and then, without hinting at the compositions from which the programmes were translated, send some of their disciples on a quest for the originals. It surely would be great fun. Or they might translate a number of compositions into their programmes, and then, again without hinting at the names of the compositions thus translated, appoint disciples to the task of a re-translation of the programmes into music. Would there ever happen to be even a remote family likeness between the re-translation and the original? I doubt it. Or a third interesting experiment would be, to get the programmatic philosopher to write out his own programme for a number of compositions; he surely could undertake the task with the full assurance of success; then let him place these stories of the music in a secret place. His disciples would then be instructed to give their programmatic explanations; and when the day of examination was appointed, the discord of babel would be harmony compared with the confusion of stories which would then see the light. There must be something hopelessly false about a theory whose examination would result in such a tissue of absurdities. The real music of the world is something different from this.

Others there are, again, enthusiastic musicians, whose notions, while more near the truth in their

general tendency, attribute to music power as a minutely detailed and definite exponent of the emotions which is altogether beyond its province. They affirm that the business of music is to express the manifold shades of human emotion. They think that the composer sat down of malice prepense to portray the mood, the humour, the feelings, which came over him as the hour of composition or conception passed by. And they are not content that he should express these feelings and moods vaguely and in a general way; they look for minute and fantastic interpretations of the varied grades of emotion which they persuade themselves are to be found in each successive measure. Once a clever musician of this school was called in by a piano teacher of renown to examine a pupil upon his interpretation of one of Beethoven's sonatas. This learned professor interrupted the unfortunate performer at a certain chord which stood rather isolated, and asked in a rapt manner for an explanation in words of the emotional significance of this chord. When the poor pupil looked up in blank dismay and answered never a word, she was promptly sent out of the room as a person for whom there could be no hope for evermore in the world of music. Such absurdities as this are the logical outcome of a philosophy of music whose principles are false. The real music of the world is not to be

explained by any theory which involves an absurdity. Finally, there is a very large class of men, who, while they allow that music is somehow or other an exponent of human nature; yet because they have been all their lives accustomed to express themselves by the symbolism of words, and have been accustomed to look in the literature of words for the great thought of the world, fall into the error of regarding word expressions of human life alone as of great intellectual or spiritual value, and therefore regard music as belonging to a lower sphere in the economy of things. Great poetry, great oratory, great philosophy, they rank as subjects of supreme importance, powerful in their influence, noble in their essence; but music they look upon as pleasant and refining, but not one of the essentials of what is supremely great in human life. Yet, if they only knew it, the real music of the world is one of the supreme things of human life.

These four errors regarding the significance of music abound even among the cultivated classes of cultivated communities: first, that music is simply a concourse of sweet sounds useful only in proportion to the amount of sensuous pleasure it is capable of giving to those who hear; secondly, that it is an art whose exact significance may be translated into words; thirdly, that it is composed for the purpose of giving a definite representation of the moods

and feelings of its creator, a representation which can be expressed in words, and, fourthly, that it is not to be regarded as one of the great things of the world simply because the symbolism of its expression is not words.

WHAT THE GREAT MUSIC OF THE WORLD DOES SIGNIFY.

At first it may be said that there are two large classes in every branch of art of which neither is really great. There is the class of cold formalism; and there is the class of emotionalism without artistic design. All art that is truly great must possess both beauty of form and beauty of personality.

In the case of instrumental music it is true further that it must be complete in itself if it is really great. It must be self-contained. As Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley puts it: "It must depend solely on itself for its effects, and in no wise require the aid of words, scenery, acting or any other extraneous condition." The modern fad of attempting to materialise music by making it subservient to some scheme of words which is supposed to serve as its basis and its explanation, is entirely contrary

to the self-contained beauty and nobility of music as an art. It is worthily said that "the passion for realism in art, and especially in the art of music, seems universal. Pure music the mass of the people do not seem able to grasp; they prefer that which humbly waits upon legend or poem, the character of a crazy knight-errant, or the proceedings of a day in a composer's household. But between music pure and free; between the C minor symphony of Beethoven and that which is the slave of a programme, there is no comparison."

It is now possible for us to formulate three of the articles of the true faith regarding the significance of the great music of the world. First, it must be beautiful in form; secondly, it must, in that beautiful form, express a beautiful personality; and, thirdly, if it is instrumental music, it must be entirely self-contained.

The world is always harping after an *object* and a *moral* in what is set before it for its delectation. It is seldom content to take the beautiful thing provided, and absorb the beauty to its own joy and edification. It asks: "What is its object, what does it mean; what moral does it illustrate?" It is like the man who when he was asked for his opinion of Milton's "Paradise Lost" replied that he could not see that it proved anything. The public are so serious in their anxiety to have an object and a

moral, that even in the literature of story writing we are deluged with novels with a problem. It was not so in the days of Boccacio, of Cervantes, of Defoe, of Fielding, of Jane Austen. It was not so in the days of Greek literature and art. The best art of all the ages and nations of the world was produced for the joy of bringing a beautiful thing into the world. It has no object and no moral. It is beautiful; that is all.

So was it in the case of the great music of the world. An idea of beauty in sound is conceived in the mind of the composer. That idea he then moulds and expands and causes to develop, until it attains its full stature of artistic shape. He then writes it down in order that the world may be sharer in his joy in bringing beauty into the world. He cannot choose but conceive beauty in sound; it is a joy to him to fashion it to perfection of design; that is his way of putting into a tangible shape the beauty which came as an inspiration into his soul.

THE EXPRESSION OF PERSONALITY IN MUSIC.

But although the composer had no fixed intention as to an object or a moral in his mind when writing his music beyond the intention of putting

sound into a beautiful form, it does not follow at all that there is no virtue in the music beyond the sensuous beauty of the sound. In every great work of art there is expressed, how we cannot tell, something of the personality of its creator. The image and superscription of Beethoven is unmistakably on his music. His personality lives passionately in that music. His compositions are not impersonal forms of beauty. They are living expressions of character; they are personal appeals from the soul of a man to the souls of men. How it can be; why it is so, is beyond the power of man to tell.

It will now be understood that the true significance of fine music is that it expresses the beauty of a beautiful personality, the grandeur of a grand personality, the nobility of a noble personality, in a design of artistic form; it reveals the wonders of the character of genius in a concourse of sounds which appeal to the souls as well as to the ears of men; and that it needs nothing beyond itself to make that appeal intelligible.

It is in this that the greatness, that the spirituality, that the supreme excellence of music consists.

Throughout all the ages great men have arisen in the world who were impelled by some power within and beyond them, by some power immanent and transcendent, to give artistic expression to the joy and beauty which welled up in their innermost souls.

These are the creators of the immortal art of mankind. These, poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, are they to whom has been vouchsafed some breath of life transcending the life which is vouchsafed to ordinary mortals. Each of these great men worked with undying energy to leave with the world some adequate expression of his intellectual and spiritual nature.

In the earlier ages of the world's history its art was generally expressed in the symbolism of words, or in the material imagery of the painter or sculptor. As mankind grew in civilization, as his feelings and ideas increased in number and complexity, as his spiritual nature developed, his word symbols, by means of which he expressed himself, developed also, until the language of words at length reached the angelic nicety of expressive power which is to be found in the Greek poems of Athens's time of glory, until it became capable of expressing the sublime imaginations of our Milton, and the thousand varied beauties of thought and feeling with which we are familiar in the literature of England. But a day came in which it was felt that the symbolism of words could no longer give adequate expression to all the refinements and complexities of the emotions of the human heart. And so the new symbolism, expressing sounds by means of notes, whose development had been proceeding slowly until about two

centuries ago, began to be used by a number of the world's greatest men. These mighty musicians, feeling that in their hearts and minds was a message which was beyond the power of words to express, moulded and developed this new art, amplifying its scope, and perfecting its delicacy, so that it might be a fit medium for interpreting the noblest emotions of the noblest hearts. And to be the adequate and the beautiful exponent of the best feelings of the noblest minds is music's loftiest province.

THE IMMATERIAL QUALITY OF ABSOLUTE MUSIC.

Fielding, in his "Covent Garden Journal," remarks: "As for the bulk of mankind they are clearly devoid of any degree of taste. It is a quality in which they advance very little beyond a state of infancy. The first thing a child is fond of in a book, is a picture; the second is a story. Here then is the true *pons asinorum* which very few readers ever get over." A great many of the musicians of to-day appear to be aiming at this childlike taste in music. They must have their picture, or, if they have advanced one step further, they must have their story. Unless the music is made to appear before their mind's eye by some material explana-

tion, it is regarded as too ghostly and illusive to be of much import or efficacy. They look upon absolute music as most of us regard the "astral body" of the theosophist, something quite too attenuated, quite too intangible, quite too immaterial, for this world of actions and pictures and stories. And it seems rather strange, too, that now, when idealistic philosophy is assuming in men's minds the prominent place which was held thirty years ago by materialistic philosophy, so many musicians are setting their faces against the truer and more idealistic view of music and are ranking themselves with Fielding's children in matters of taste.

But the great musicians of the world knew better. And so they used the symbolism of music to interpret the ethereal moods of the soul. They recognised that its power was communicated, not through ideas, but by impressions; that it was the imagination, the emotion, the personality of its creator in his finest moments, expressed beautifully through the medium of sound. Oliver Wendell Holmes understood something of this spiritual superiority of music when he spoke of the exalted condition into which he was thrown by fine music, a region of emotion beyond the power of words to produce. But it is palpably impossible to learn rightly to appreciate the finest music, and to enter into sympathy with its spiritual import, if we deliberately turn away our

minds from its essential difference, if we try to destroy its very meaning, by translating it into the crude language of material imagery.

Some of our literary men dimly appreciated the significance of music; although it is rather remarkable to notice how few of them troubled their heads on the subject. It is remarkable because of the enormous help a nice appreciation of the architectural and emotional beauties of music would be to them in their own work. How much more discerning would much of our literary criticism be if its writers had been thoroughly conversant with the great literature of music; if they had fully appreciated the qualities of its emotion and the beauty of its form. That strange, but magnificent writer, Sir Thomas Browne, had one of those dim literary illuminations when he said that: "There is something in music of divinity more than the ear discovers; it is an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world and creatures of God; such a melody to the ear as the whole world, well understood, would afford to the understanding. In brief, it is a sensible fit of that harmony, which intellectually sounds in the ears of God." And again, there is a brighter illumination in the eloquence of Newman: "There is a divinity in the wonderful creations of sublimity and beauty of which I am speaking. Is it possible that this inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes,

so rich yet so simple, so intricate yet so regulated, so various yet so majestic, should be a mere sound that is gone and perishes? Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart and keen emotions, those strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot be. No! They have escaped from some higher sphere, they are the out-pourings of eternal harmony through the medium of created sound, they are echoes from our home; they are the voice of angels or the *magnificat* of saints or the divine attributes; something are they above themselves, which we cannot compass, which we cannot utter, though mortal man has the gift of eliciting them." Surely these conceptions of music are more consonant with our finest thoughts than the pictures and stories to which we are invited by those who would have us translate this noble art into the terms of material imagery.

De Quincey was another of our literary men who had some share of the nobility of imagination without which it is impossible to have full communion with the best of the music of the world. And so he says that music, "speaking through the genial nature of man and his excited sensibilities, can teach only as nature teaches, as forests teach, as the sea teaches,

as infancy teaches, by hieroglyphic suggestion. Its teaching is not direct or explicit, but lurking, implicit, masked in deep incarnations."

But the bulk of mankind, as old Fielding says, want a picture or a story. Why is this? Simply because they are entirely familiar and at home with pictures and stories throughout the whole course of their life in this world. A picture or a story represents to them something definite and graspable. And this is the very reason why so many votaries of religion also use abundantly these very things, pictures and stories. They know how familiar they are to men and how easy it is to make an appeal through them. And so also it is that so soon as any man of wider and more ideal thought tells his message to the world, the charge is at once brought against him that he is vague and indefinite. In the sphere of music the programmatic devotee urges that music would be too vague and indefinite if left to explain its own import; and that it can only be made intelligible to man by introducing the picture or the story. That was not the view of thoughtful musicians themselves. Mendelssohn maintained that musical utterance "is positive, and remains so whether or not a more general significance be attributed to it; whilst any verbal or pictorial allusion to the effects of music will be less definite than the music itself." In other words, music expresses some-

thing exactly, and that something can only be expressed by music. Although that something cannot be expressed in words or by pictures, or in any other way, there is in its method no inferiority to, but rather a superiority over, all other symbolisms. Its lucidity is unsurpassable; its nicety is unsurpassable; and its ethereal qualities are, above all its other excellences, unsurpassable.

The true significance, then, of absolute music is that it expresses human personality at its finest moments, adequately, beautifully and spiritually, by the medium of sound. And therefore our finest music is one of the supreme possessions of the world; for there is nothing greater than great personality.*

* See Appendix at end of volume.

II.

The Factor of Personality in Music.

THE supreme factor in all the greatest art of the world; the supreme factor in the greatest music of the world, is personality. Art that is truly great is an expression of the personality of a man who is truly great, at his finest moments, and in a form that is beautiful. How that personality comes to be definitely expressed in music is a thing which no man can explain. As that penetrating literary critic, Bagehot, says: "It is very difficult, even for those who have the best opportunities, to analyse the impression" created by a personality. And yet the impressions are powerful although they elude analysis. "A personal author is not necessarily one who babbles to his readers about himself and his belongings, his likes and dislikes, but he is one whose spirit hovers and broods over his own page;

vith whose treatise is bound up a living thing." "To
oe able to make one's individuality felt in writing is
iot only distinction, but under favouring circum-
stances, immortality." All our greatest musicians
ire *personal* authors. They not only possess indi-
viduality, but they make it felt in their writing.
Their impressions or emotions are felt keenly by
hemselves, and are of such a nature as to command
he attention of all feeling men. In themselves
ind their methods these musicians are the very anti-
hesis of all that is boring. Their immortality con-
sists in this—that their personality is of majestic
proportions; that it appeals to the intellects and
iearts of men of intellect and heart in every coun-
ry and in every age; and that it is expressed in
such a form that both the grandeur of the spirit and
he beauty of the design may be felt and admired.

In proportion to the might, the majesty, the
beauty of the personality, is its power and dominion.
Given a noble personality, the music will be noble—
he more so if the design is also beautiful and the
vorkmanship finished. Given a personality that is
commonplace, the music will be commonplace, no
matter what other qualities enter into the composi-
ion. There is no point of art criticism which is so
often lost sight of and which is so essential to the
formation of a just judgment, as a discriminating
analysis of the quality of personality expressed in a

work. No more can come out of a man than is in him; and if we can weigh the man truly so as to tell exactly how much is in him, then we can the more surely estimate his right rank in the sphere of art. If we are rightly to estimate the art, we must rightly estimate the character of the personality which is expressed in that art.

If these views of art are true in principle; if personality is the supreme factor; if the very essence of what is great in art is, the expression of noble personality in a beautiful form, then we have a ready answer to many of the specious theories of modern enthusiasts, who speak with supercilious scorn of the splendid music of the past, in order to try to justify their nebulous notions about some imaginary music which is to arise in the future. Mr. Wallace, for example, works himself into a kind of frenzy when he begins to talk about some of the greatest musicians the world has ever seen, as babies standing on the "Threshold" of his imaginary world of music yet to be created. And then there is the whole army of "programme" advocates, utterly dissatisfied with the self-contained and absolute music of the world, looking for novel music which is to tell some story in the sounds as they whirl by in their noisy and formless chase. We have with us crowds of these critics whose catchword is "progress." But they confound the words "progress"

and "change"; they keep their attention so persistently fixed upon changes and complications in modes of expression that they lose sight of basic realities; and, finally, they come to regard all change, whether it be for the better or for the worse, as "progress." But if the art principles here formulated are sound, and they appear to be in conformance with the basic principles of the finest art of all ages, can we not, by their application, dispose at once of most of these theories and their self-satisfied theories; can we not, by their aid, give a good reason for the faith that is in us? If the music of Bach, of Handel, of Mozart, of Beethoven, adequately expressed, in a beautiful form, the unique personalities of these great men in their best moments, is it possible for musical art to go much beyond this? The forms of our musical expression may change; the forms of all expressions of personality in art have changed many times in the history of the world; but the essential question is this—whether, with all the change of form, art has, in any one of its branches, ever accomplished more than to express in a beautiful form the great imaginative personalities who were its creators? And if this be so, what folly it is to look back with scorn upon the musical art of the past as a thing obsolete or even out-of-date; what folly to fall down and worship the transitory form and forget the

essential reality by virtue of which the masterpieces of art are immortal. We might as well speak sneeringly of the sculpture of Phidias and Praxiteles; of the poetry of Æschylus and Sophocles; of the painting of Titian and Leonardo da Vinci.

The essential reality, the supreme factor, is the personality. Of what kind was the personality of these great musicians of the past; and how did they express that personality in their music? If they are great personalities and adequately expressed, then their music can never be antiquated, it can never be superseded, until a new race of men arise beside whom those mighty geniuses of the past shall seem small. It is noteworthy that throughout the whole history of art, in contradistinction to the general principle of evolution in races, in social conditions, in forms of expression, there has not been any corresponding evolution in the imaginative personalities of the creators of art. The seers, the poets, the painters, the musicians, appear on our earth, some at one time, some at another; some thousands of years ago, some very near our own generation; and yet there is no sign of evolution in the greatness, in the grandeur, in the beauty of the imagination or personality as we move along the history of the ages. Is Milton greater than Æschylus; Dante than Sophocles; Canova than Phidias; Turner than Titian; Beethoven than Bach? They are all mighty

men, but they do not show that marked evolution of imaginative personality which we should have looked for in accordance with the almost universal development to be recognised in nearly all provinces of human life. It is, therefore, evident that when we talk in bombastic language about progress in musical art; when we speak in ecstasies about what is soon to be heard inside the door on whose "threshold in music" we stand; when we allow ourselves to commit the indecency of sneering at the music of Handel and Mozart; we are proving our inability to understand art at all; we are worshipping the appearance and despising the reality; we are magnifying the changing forms and mimimising the importance of both the personality and the workmanship.

If our modern revolutionary enthusiasts desire to test the question whether the music of to-day really shows progress in art, or simply a fantastic change of form in the symbolism of musical expression, they will apply to this modern music the measure of the rule—they will apply the principles and standards regarding art which have ever, throughout the history of the world, determined its true rank. They will enquire whether in these latter days we have any greater personalities, any forms more beautiful, any workmanship more exquisite, than those expressed in the best music of Bach, Handel,

Mozart and Beethoven. If these modern critics have any such marvels of creative genius to point to, let them name them. The world is waiting to feel the power of the personality and to glory in the beauty of the work. That is the crucial test upon which depends the rightness or wrongness of the modern theories of "progress" in musical art. The crucial question is not whether music is now in a state of transition (it always is); it is not whether its resources for expression are becoming richer and more complicated (they always are); it is not whether modern composers are writing in newer forms (they nearly always do); but it eternally is, whether the personalities are as great, whether the designs are as lucid and shapely; and whether the workmanship is as exquisite.

How is it possible to exercise this critical function justly; how is it possible to set personalities, design and workmanship in the balances, and weigh and compare them? Just in that same method by which all the art of all the ages has been judged and hall-marked—by constant comparison with those standards which have long been approved by the collective wisdom and taste of mankind. The wisdom and taste of those who have secured for us, from the early ages of Greece and Rome, the immortality of that illustrious line of poets, painters, sculptors and musicians, which is the most treasured posses-

ion of all the most intellectual and cultivated people of every age, cannot be very far wrong. This is the counsel of Goethe. "Taste is to be educated only by contemplation, not of the tolerably good, but of the truly excellent. I therefore show you only the best works, and when you are *grounded* in these you will have a standard for the rest, which you will know how to value without over-rating them." "Matthew Arnold, too, recommended us all to carry in our heads scraps of Homer and Virgil, of Dante and Shakespeare, of Milton and Keats, as a kind of taste-tonic." Among the musicians of the world, the collective judgment of mankind has set the seal of its approval upon the names, the works, the personalities, of Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven. The fevers and passions which affect the judgments of their contemporaries have now long passed away; the cultivated judgment of succeeding generations has weighed their works; their virtues and their faults have been discussed and re-discussed by the discerning; they have been compared with the illustrious line of the great creators of all time; the world has recorded its irrevocable verdict in their favour. "Thus it is with writers who are to have a currency throughout the ages. In the beginning they are confounded with most others; but being once above the heads of their contemporaries, they rise slowly and waveringly,

then regularly and erectly, then rapidly and majestically, till the vision strains and aches as it pursues them in their ethereal elevation."

In these musicians, therefore, if we desire to weigh justly the personality and workmanship of the music since their time, we can find balances which, rightly used, cannot err.

If we were asked to point out some of the generic qualities which distinguished these men and led to their eternal elevation in the hearts and intellects of mankind, what should we answer? We should answer that in every case they were in their personalities princes among the sons of men, that they were rulers of their own spirit, and that they were masters of craftsmanship. As in the personality of all the creators of art which is immortal, they have the distinguishing characteristics of majesty, grace, beauty, power, the strength of confidence, nobility of emotion, fervour of spirit, commanding intellect; while in their workmanship there is spontaneity, intellectual lucidity, exquisite melody, beauty of design. They are intensely interested in what they create; and the moods and emotions which they embody in their works are such moods and passions as touch the sympathies of all men of sufficient intellect and heart to understand.

A rapid glance at the characteristics of the personality and workmanship of these great composers

will furnish us with a better appreciation of the value of the critical balances of old standards and will enable us to estimate the more justly the value of modern tendencies.

What is to be said of Handel? How has he been regarded by the great among those of old, and by the small among those of to-day? As a man he was eminently self-respecting, of indomitable pride and independence. He was strong, joyous, masterful, the equal of kings, knowing himself a king. He is our finest representative of the sublime in music; and his music expresses his personality. He is the Æschylus, the Michael Angelo, the Milton, of our musical literature, with a warmth of human expression which none of these possessed in equal measure. "In his highest productions he rises to a moral grandeur not often attained in musical art." He has written "the most thrilling harmonies that ever gave voice to the majesty of grief." Never since the days when the lonely seer of Patmos recorded his sublime visions in the Apocalypse have such majestic accents as those of Handel been heard from the pen of man. He, too, saw heavenly visions: "I did think I could see all heaven before me, and the great God Himself." "Sublimity," says Coleridge, "is Hebrew by birth; and sublimity seems to be almost confined to Handel's settings of Scripture words."

Handel has long since been judged, not alone by the collective wisdom and taste of the world, but also by his peers in music; and it is well in these days when scorn is somewhat fashionable, to refresh our memories with the fervour of their praise. "Of all of us, Handel knows best how to produce great effects; when he desires he crashes like the thunderbolt." This is Mozart's humble view of the matter. But, since Mozart has been charged with the unfortunate possession of a "mediocre intellect" by no less a man than Mr. William Wallace, a more convincing appeal may be made to the mighty modern, Beethoven: "Handel is the greatest and ablest of all composers; from him I can still learn. I used to regard Mozart as the greatest, but since I have become acquainted with Handel I put him at the head." "I cannot describe to you with what pathos, I am inclined to say with what sublimity of language, Beethoven spoke of the 'Messiah' of Handel. Every one of us was moved when he said, 'I would uncover my head and kneel on his tomb.'" And of Haydn it is told that at a performance of the "Messiah" in Westminster he was so overpowered by its sublimity that he wept like a child. Nor was it alone his compeers who were so affected, who were so moved to spiritual enthusiasm by the majesty of Handel's personality as it was expressed in his music. It was so also of the common people, who

heard him gladly. Everyone remembers the case of the peasant standing up in the crowd and shouting "Handel's in heaven for that; Handel's in heaven for that!"

Here, then, is one of the critical balances by which we may measure the attitude of modern tendencies. On the one side we have these records of reverential homage paid to the majesty of Handel by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; on the other hand, we have the carping sneers of many a modern critic. Should not this striking contrast disturb our smug satisfaction in our musical "progress"? Let us hear, as an example of the modern view, a comment of Mr. Fuller-Maitland from the "Oxford History of Music," a work which is surely quite up-to-date. "In studying all but a very few exceptionally inspired pages of his works, we remain conscious of the full-bottomed wig, the lace ruffles and all the other various details of his costume." Yet Haydn wept at the power of his majesty; and Beethoven would uncover his head and kneel at his tomb; while Mr. Fuller-Maitland is obsessed by his wig and ruffles. Could there be a more scathing criticism of the attitude of modern conceit than the simple placing of these opinions side by side? Surely these cheap sneers only serve to show how erroneously we confuse the changing forms of expression with the everlasting essence of personality;

how, in the multitudinous complications of modern musical devices, we have lost sight of the supreme factor—noble personality beautifully expressed. The crucial question is, can we in these days prove the existence of a personality so majestic as that of Handel; have we anything in modern music which speaks in accents so sublime and so beautiful? If we have not; if, in our modern art, "exaggerated emotions, violent incidents, monstrous characters, crowd our canvas; they are the resource of a weakness which would obtain the fame of strength"; if we cannot prove this, if this be not the truth, then what is called "progress" by our modern revolutionary critics is but another and pleasanter name for degeneracy." I confess I had rather shelter myself behind Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, in their reverence for old standards, than march with self-satisfied exultation along the path of modern tendencies by the side of Mr. Fuller-Maitland and Mr. William Wallace.

Or if we turn to the great compeer and contemporary of Handel, what do we perceive to be the prevailing characteristics of his personality? What account do men give of John Sebastian Bach? Intensity, intellectual might, high seriousness, deep religious fervour, are traits which force themselves upon the attention, whether you examine into the face of the man, or into his works. And it is worthy of notice that deep religious feeling is one of the

most marked characteristics of all our greatest composers. The strength of their faith gave them that majestic confidence which is so nobly expressed in their art. Possibly the lack of so robust a faith in our progressive times may in some measure account for the absence of joy, of large sanity, of contagious healthiness of spirit, in much of the art and literature of our own time.

One of the severest tests of the greatness of a man is his treatment of intense sorrow and anguish. If he has any weakness, it is there you can convict him of weakness. The confusion of his own defeat by the emotion which he attempts to depict, or the melancholy which pervades his work, are the tokens that he was not strong enough to deal adequately with his subject. Shakespeare, as he shows in his "Lear," and Dante, in his epic, have the same intellectual intensity as Bach; and both prove their supreme power by the mastery of their mode of dealing with the profoundest human passion. In "Lear" Shakespeare is the creator of volcanoes of fervid emotion; but they are in his full control; above them he is calm. In that drama there is incalculable agony; physical and spiritual agony. But however lesser men may be moved by the anguish of spirit which they depict, it was Shakespeare's supreme power, by almost superhuman strength and immeasurable intellectual force, to be

conqueror for ever, even where "the whirlwind of impassioned life tosses to and fro the leaves" of the book whereon his drama is written. John Sebastian Bach has the same intellectual majesty, the same kingly rule over passion, the same splendour of imagination as a painter of deep emotion. In his sublime "Passion of St. Matthew" there is agony as noble and as strong as is to be found in "Lear"; but the creator of it, though he felt to the uttermost, was, as Shakespeare, for ever victor. And the result of this mastery is that those who hear such music are uplifted in spirit; they never come away oppressed by the sense of woe, defeat, despair. And it is in this very sphere that all but the mightiest of the sons of men fail; overcome themselves, they affect the hearer painfully by their own turbulence, or else create, instead of noble sorrow, sentimental melancholy. Beethoven himself, splendid as was his genius, had not always this distinguishing power of standing calm above the tempest he created. His music sometimes tells of a spirit torn by its own strifes. He is mighty, but the absolute mastery which marks the mightiest of the earth was not for ever his. Or, on the other hand, if we compare the religious music of Gounod with that of Bach or Handel, we shall notice the taint of sentiment, the weak flavour of melancholy, which lurks in the spiritual atmosphere of it all.

In both Handel and Bach we have excellent exemplifications of the truth of the saying of Ruskin that "In proportion to the kingliness and force of any personality, the expression of its joy or suffering becomes capable of interpretation by the majesty of ordered, beautiful sounds." These men have both written what the world would not "willingly let die." They were able to transmute into the language of music such emotions as flash on the minds of seers. "A brooding sublimity haunts" the music of Bach; "the spirit of the great composer moves over the face of the page." Both of them were recipients of the inspiration of "that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar." Bach was the more austere and intense; he was the more brooding and entirely serious; he was more the meditative recluse and the religious solitary; and his music reflects the personality of the man. Handel, like Milton, with "the igneous glow of primary genius brings forth ideas like the primeval granite, simple and astounding." And so varied are his gifts that gentle beauty is as much akin to him as grandeur. "His music in consequence is like our own lake scenery, where nature has herself the same combination of grandeur and beauty, where we have Rydal water side by side with the everlasting upheaved mountain."

Perhaps the grandeur of the personality of Bach is best to be experienced in his B minor Mass. "The weight and momentum of the choruses and the intense fervour of his style impress one with an idea of colossal power and deep earnestness of purpose such as no other choral work in existence conveys in the same degree." Even Mr. Fuller-Maitland, to do him justice, adds his tribute of eloquent praise: "The stupendous Mass in B minor is not unlike a magnificent gothic cathedral, full of mystery and confusion to the unaccustomed eye, with its distances lost in a perplexing maze of interwoven arches." . . . . "Not even in the settings of the Passion has Bach revealed such a wealth of massive conceptions, every theme of which is not only noble and expressive but individual." "The whole of the choral numbers have a splendour of intricate treatment and a propriety in regard to illustrating the words, that are not surpassed in any music of earlier or later date." And Sir Hubert Parry is convinced that the musical constitution of Bach is "the purest, the noblest and the most full of human feeling and emotion ever possessed by any musical composer."

An important factor to be taken into account when attempting to form an estimate of these great men and their music, is the circumscribed nature of the instruments through which their music had to be interpreted. They were without our marvellous or-

chestral resources; they had no instruments equal in tone and sympathetic response to those which are to-day in the hands of every musician. They had not the stimulus for their musical imagination which now exists in every musical country. They had to depend upon the kingliness of their personality and the splendour of their own imaginations for the beauty which was to make their work immortal. It would not be easy to find a critical contrast so telling as that between the finest fugues in the "Woltempirirte" Clavier and one of Richard Strauss' symphonic-poems. Bach "illustrates most remarkably the distinction between intellectual grandeur of spirit and mere physical elaboration of sound in music." Intellectual mastery, finished workmanship, a marvellous store of wealth created out of small means, form and emotional content both surprisingly beautiful, we find in these creations of Bach.

Upon turning to the work of Strauss, what constitutes the startling contrast is the multiplicity of complicated resource which is placed under contribution in order to produce the result he labours to achieve. Ingenuity, originality, complication, are there, sure enough. But if one were to strip Strauss of his colours and complications, and were to lay bare the central musical ideas which formed the basis of all, the difference would at once become

apparent between what is meant by intellectual grandeur of spirit and mere physical elaboration of sound.

The first time I heard examples of the ultra-modern sensationalism in music, I confess I was amazed at the wealth of orchestral resource, at the formlessness of the flow of sounds, at the lack of what my ears had long been accustomed to regard as beautiful, at the unpleasant character of what there was to be discovered of emotional content. The intention of some of my considerations upon the superiority of old standards over modern tendencies will be illustrated by a record of some of my impressions upon hearing Strauss's symphonic poem, "Death and Transfiguration." No doubt was left in my mind for a moment that its composer was an extraordinary man and that he was in earnest in what he wrote. He is enormously clever; and he possesses not only a strange but also a strong personality. His manipulation of the technique of orchestration is nothing short of amazing; whether it is as artistic as it is queer is quite another matter. But this symphonic poem is not music in the ordinary sense of the term; whether you wish it or no, the composer takes very good care that your long-cherished conceptions of form, melody, harmony, are put clean away from you; and you are compelled to listen to something new and strange and

weird and grotesque and extremely fascinating. You are given a long verbal programme which is supposed to be the intelligible subject of the music so-called. If you have an imagination "sufficiently alert," to use Professor Niecks's phrase, doubtless you may find the programme in the course of the performance. In my case, the lack of an effectively trained, up-to-date imagination, must be my excuse for failure to discover any trustworthy connection between the two; and so I had to take the music as it stood, and judge it on its merits.

The strong and queer impression it creates is not easy to describe; but if one remembers Holman Hunt's weird picture of "The Scapegoat," with its haunting burden of oppression, its uncanny weight of woe, its lurid atmosphere, he could gain a shadowy notion of this orgy of sound. Imagine a hundred of Holman Hunt's scapegoats galvanised into life, and pouring forth in some dismal desert an extraordinary oration and flood of curious sounds, gorgeous in the variety of their physical and emotional colour; or imagine a company of sirens gone mad, wailing and shrieking around on a night of eerie darkness, in a symphony of fantastically assorted tones; something like this is the effect created by this work of Strauss. It is positively creepy. With all his gruesomeness the composer is wise enough to make use of the power of

contrast. In the midst of this melancholy wail of woe, in the midst of this wild clatter of tormenting sounds, every now and then there issue transitory passages which seem to make for peace. But even they give no pleasant rest: there is only such a cessation from pain as one might expect in the space between one nightmare and another. The personality pervading the whole is intensely disagreeable; you feel as if the devils have broken loose and are playing pranks with the orchestra. It is morbid, unhealthy, almost hysterical. But it is marvellously clever, diabolically clever. After such an experience, those beautiful stanzas of William Watson, "The Orgy on Parnassus," come at once into the mind. There he contrasts, with the passionate grief of a poet, the grotesque work of some modern writers with the finished cadences of the masters of verse:

"You phrase-tormenting, fantastic chorus,
With strangest words at your beck and call;
Who tumble your thoughts in a heap before us
Here was a bard will outlast you all.

You prance on language, you force, you strain it,
You rack, you rive it, you twist you maul.
Form, you abhor it, and taste, you disdain it—
And here was a bard shall outlast you all.

Prosody gasps in your tortured numbers,
Your metres that writhe, your rhythms that sprawl,
And you make him turn in his marble slumbers,
The golden-tongued who outsings you all."

It is not that in modern music you lack personality; but like much of the personality to be felt in modern art of all branches, it often repels rather than attracts. It lacks nobility; it lacks repose. It is personality, too, which speaks in a language which is not beautiful. Therefore whatever its merits may be they do not conform with those standards of excellence upon which the world has been pleased to set for ever the seal of its approbation. One lacks in these moderns the inspiration of that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar. Bach and Handel suggest "the hallowed fire"; their music has the same majestic confidence which is to be gained by solitary communion with the everlasting hills. They appeal to your intellect and heart; and the appeal is noble. But no one in his senses would compare Strauss with any one of the abiding joys of the world; no one would look to him for the majesty of repose, the strength of confidence, the light of fresh beauty.

It is a common error to praise art simply on the ground that there is a personality behind it which is strong enough to fascinate. This is the superficial criticism of many readers and many hearers. They "like it"; they "are fascinated by it"; and therefore they dub it good. Saint Beuve's critical question is the important one: "Not, do I like it;

but ought I to like it?" Surely the whole history of the world records the fascination of strong personalities, evil as well as good. Therefore one essential part of all penetrating criticism should be a just analysis of the quality of personality expressed in the art. And if we are to attain to any success in this difficult analysis, we shall be most likely to succeed by cultivating the quality of mental detachment, by isolating ourselves sometimes from the contagion of blind sympathy with conventional opinion, and by associating our hearts and intellects with those kingly personalities whose creations are immortal. There could be no more effective cure devised for the fascination of the morbid, the sentimental, the hysterical, the melancholy emotion expressed in a great deal of modern music, than constant intimacy with the grace, the beauty, the health, the confidence, the sanity, the majesty of Bach and Handel.

From Bach and Handel we shall now turn to another of the "sleeping kings" of music, whose personality is entirely different from that of any of his fellows. In the music of Mozart the traces of intellectual labour which show in Bach and the traces of emotional conflict which show in Beethoven, are altogether absent. A serene perfection of beauty, in spirit, in design, in workmanship, a serene perfection upon which there is not even the

shadow of labour or sorrow, which stands, as it were, aloof from the strife of the world, and is partaker of the calm atmosphere of some ethereal region, is the prevailing character of the finest work of Mozart. His music has that divine spontaneity and that exquisite finish which belongs to nature herself. His melody pours forth as freshly and as freely as the songs of birds; his soul pours out music as freshly and as freely as nature lavishes her blossoms in the spring. To him may fitly be applied that charming description of Shelley by De Quincey: "The eternal child." He is, in one aspect, the Raphael of music; the same seraphic beauty lights the inspirations of both. And as Browning says:

> "If you get beauty pure and simple, and nought else
> You get about the best thing God invents."

But it is quite evident that the best thing God invents is not nearly good enough for some of our modern musical revolutionists. It annoys them. Its Olympian serenity makes them feel ill at ease. They desire passion and tumult, tempest and fury. So Mr. William Wallace, looking out from "The Threshold of Music," upon the confused visions which he thinks he sees beyond, tells us that Mozart lived in an artificial age and that his music is "merely masquerade"; that "popular sentiment to

a large extent has accepted his music on the grounds of his hapless end; and that his style is "obviously trivial and superficial, judged from a modern standpoint!" It is not easy to be patient. We almost feel with Esdras that "Our psaltery is laid on the ground, our song is put to silence, our rejoicing is at an end, the light of our candlestick is put out, our holy things are defiled."

And yet, in spite of William Wallace, in spite of "triviality and masquerade," in spite of the "hapless end," the G minor, the C major, the E flat symphonies, the string quartets and quintets, the "Don Giovanni," the "Zauberflöte," the "Requiem" and many other masterpieces of that seraphic genius, remain as abiding possessions of a world which could not willingly let them die. And they shall be treasured still, and for ever, even though a vanguard of the modern school pass over Mr. Wallace's "Threshold" into the chamber of horrors in sound to which that threshold leads. Our humorous friend, Mr. Dooley, gives his opinion pretty freely upon the music to be heard beyond the threshold. To be sure, he is a layman; but have not the laymen of the world often put in the pillory the follies of fanatics in the profession? Mr. Dooley is speaking of Strauss's "Salome": "I niver heerd more thrillin' music. All th' time I felt as though I was in a dentist's chair havin' my tooth filled be a plumber's

helper. This grand composer is th' first man to inthrajooce a scissors grinder, a man filin' a saw, an' a lawn mower into an orchesthry. It isn't th' kind of music ye wud like. Ye couldn't whistle annything in it. Ye might cough in it, or ye might reprajooce it be shakin' th' stove an' steppin' on th' dog's tail at the same time, but ye couldn't whistle it. It's what ye might call a quarrelsome kind iv music, with all th' insthruments hurlin' insults at each other." Or if Mr. Dooley be objected to as beneath the dignity of the subject, the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes will do as well:

> "You'd think they were crusaders sent
> From some infernal clime,
> To pluck the eyes of Sentiment,
> And dock the tail of Rhyme,
> To crack the voice of Melody,
> And brake the legs of Time."

But let us turn from Mr. Wallace and his modern tendencies to old standards—to Haydn, to Beethoven, and to those to whom has been vouchsafed in these days, the gift of reverence, and we shall probably get nearer to reality and truth in art criticism.

Haydn's attitude towards Mozart was one of admiring homage. "I consider him to be the greatest composer of whom I have ever heard." "If I could only inspire every lover of music with feelings as

deep, and comprehension as clear as my own, in listening to the inimitable works of Mozart, then surely the nations would contend for such a jewel within their borders." The introduction of this judgment of Haydn's is, however, an oversight. We had forgotten for the moment that his music, too, is "merely masquerade," and that his mental development is considered "small." The counsel of Beethoven may therefore prove more acceptable, for not even Mr. Wallace could call him "small": "I have always counted myself among the greatest admirers of Mozart and shall be so till the day of my death." "He is the greatest of all composers except Handel." But Beethoven belonged to the more classical school, and he is therefore to some extent bound by the superseded convention that what has been accounted great art by the world is necessarily good. He cannot speak with the frank scorn of a late critic who compared Mozart with Tom Moore. Let us therefore pass on to the verdicts of two genuinely poetic souls of the romantic school. "Chopin presents the strange spectacle of a thoroughly romantic composer, who, while he has no sympathy with Berlioz or Liszt, yet esteemed Mozart, the purest type of classicist, highest among all composers living or dead." "Him he regarded as the ideal type, the poet *par excellence*." And Grieg, sweet soul, records his tribute of praise thus:

"In Mozart I admire the divine instinct. His highest inspirations seem untouched by human labour. He creates like a God—without pain."

These are the sentiments towards Mozart of those who have kinship with his nobility, who can feel the beauty of his personality, who understand the glory of his music. But while we may deplore the fact that there are critics in our day who can sneer even at Mozart, it is some comfort to learn that such an evil is not exclusively the possession of our day and generation. There were Mr. Wallaces in the time of Mendelssohn. He tells us of a man who set about asking "what I thought of Mozart and his various offences. But I replied that for my part I would gladly throw my virtues overboard and take the sins of Mozart in their place." . . . "What a thing it is that such fellows should not hesitate before the greatest names." Then he goes on to comfort himself with the reflection that composers are not the only persons to be carped at by small critics. Painters are offered the same fare. These critics "sit round on the benches with their brigand-hats, and discourse of Titian as though he was there one of themselves. And their business is to paint sickly madonnas, rickety saints and effeminate knights, things one longs to dash his fist through. As for Titian's picture in the Vatican, these infernal critics have no respect for it. It

never occurs to one of them that a master who gave laborious days of love and reverence to a picture, may still have seen as far as they can through their glistening spectacles. They stand before all the wonderful visions of which they have no true inkling, and pretend to criticise them."

If, again, we turn from the musical companions of Mozart in the firmament of genius, to the judgments of thoughtful and reverent critics, of penetrating intellect and artistic taste, we shall find their voices joined with the multitudes of all nations who glory in their homage to him. All the well-informed world knows the critical acumen, the wide culture, the artistic perceptions of Otto Jahn. And he rejoices in his opportunities for praise: "The majestic beauty which appears to absorb all the other conditions of art production and to blend them into purest harmony, is overpoweringly present in the works of both Mozart and Raphael." . . . . "It will readily be acknowledged that Mozart is closely allied to Shakespeare in fertility, force, reality of dramatic invention and breadth of humour, and to Goethe in simplicity and naturalness of human sentiment and in plastic clearness of idea." . . . . "There is something higher in Mozart than fertility and many-sidedness: that which makes music to him not a conquered territory but a native home; that by which he touches every one of

his conceptions with the torch of genius whose undying flame is visible to all who approach his works with the eyes of their imagination unbound." . . . "Wherever the highest and best names of every art and every age are called for, there, among the first, will be the name of Wolfgang Amade Mozart."

"It would be impossible to find anywhere more perfect beauty, without spot or stain, than in the slow movement of the Symphony in C"; so writes Statham, and beauty, pure and simple, is about the best thing God invents. And speaking of the Requiem, Hadow writes: "We are reminded of music, which, in beauty, in pathos, in unerring mastery of its medium, touches 'the outside verge that rounds our faculty.' This work is as far beyond praise as it is beyond criticism; we might as readily pronounce upon the Parthenon or the Vatican Hermes. It is of that kind of genius about which we wonder, not how it accomplishes its aim, but how it has ever come to exist at all: there is no analogy with the characters and abilities of ordinary men, no common measure, no common standpoint. From its serene and unapproachable majesty commendation recoils, and to advocate its excellence is to pass sentence on our own opinion." And Hadow knew what he was talking about, though he never stood on the "threshold of music." It is well sometimes to place side by side such noble tributes of

appreciation as those I have quoted, with the superficial sneers of "modern" critics. The juxtaposition serves for edification and instruction. "Merely masquerade." . . . . "Obviously trivial and superficial." . . . . "Small mental development." Are these phrases not more apt to be true of those who stand on the "threshold" and indulge in such vituperations?

A great deal of our modern musical philosophy seems to be based upon misunderstandings of what is the real import of music. Many persons, from a life-long habit of expressing their thoughts and feelings in the language of words, are quite unconscious of the fact that human personality can be expressed with equal adequacy, delicacy and clearness by any other form of symbols. And if any other symbolism is offered to them as amply adequate for the full expression of personality, they immediately deny in their hearts its efficacy; and demand that the new symbolism be translated into the symbolism of words with which they are familiar. When you reply to their question as to the meaning of music, that it is certain aspects of personality expressed in a design which is beautiful, they stolidly repeat their original enquiry, "But what does it mean?" And to a person who is so unfamiliar with the symbolism of music, with the language of music, that he cannot at once feel its

significance, what is there to be said? You might as well attempt to impress the beauty of colour on a blind man. You can say, "Music is a language itself; it is entirely self-contained. It deals with immaterial things, and cannot therefore be translated into concrete terms. It means exactly what it says. It cannot even be paraphrased into other musical forms, as poetry can be paraphrased into prose. It is a finished, a delicate and a beautiful language in itself, and it expresses the finest moods and moments of the finest minds." You can say all this, but the ordinary man will still stolidly ask you to translate its meaning into the words of the language with which he is accustomed to express himself. And I think this is the basic trouble of these modern critics who stand on the "threshold of music." They do not understand music as a definite language; they think its meaning is not definite or clear enough unless it can be put into words. Mendelssohn was both musician enough and philosopher enough to feel and explain the real import of music: "After all, what is the beauty you find in a quartet or a symphony that I have worked into shape? Surely it is nothing but the piece of myself that I have put into it, given voice to in that fashion." . . . . "My own belief is that words are inadequate to express music, and if it were otherwise I should end by leaving off compos-

ing altogether. One constantly hears people saying that the meaning of music is so indefinite; and yet they imply that language is intelligible to everybody. With me it is exactly the opposite." . . . . "What any music I care for means to me is not an indefinite feeling which one might render definite by translating it into words, but something perfectly clear. . . . . If you ask me what was in my mind while composing a particular piece, I answer, the piece itself precisely as it stands." That is to say, music is its own language; its province is to express, and to express clearly and adequately, what could not be expressed in any other language whatsoever. And we have, at all events, one modern critic of great ability, who appreciated this basic significance of the language of music—Felix Weingartner. "Music is an art which can never convey concrete conceptions to us because it shows us the deepest reality of the world in the most subtle form, and for this reason it stands high above the other arts. It is robbed of its majesty if the artist seeks to convey concrete conceptions by it as the language of words does." . . . . "It can interpret moods, it can represent a mental state that some event has caused in us, but it cannot picture the event itself. That is the task of poetry, painting, sculpture. If this task is attempted in music the result is not only incomprehensible but ridiculous." . . . . "A good

piece of music speaks to us with more power than anything else."

The second basic error of the critics who stand on the "threshold" is, that musical art, in order to be great, must be complicated; that in proportion to its complication is the chance of its greatness; and that simplicity implies puerility. The history of the art of the world does not teach any such lesson. Great art may indeed be complex, but it is not its complexity that makes it great. All noble art is the natural and beautiful expression of noble personality. It is by virtue of its beauty and its comprehensive appeal to human nature that it is heard and treasured by the world. The greatest creators of art had splendid originality without affectation. They had striking modes of expressing personality, but so natural, at the same time, that their art always awakens a sympathetic response in the hearts of men. And they all had splendour of imagination. Cervantes and Defoe are simple; while there is far more complexity in the art of Scott. But all of these are great men; they have all the qualities which belongs to the art which lives. Homer and Chaucer and Burns are simple; Æschylus and Milton and Dante are complex; but they all have mighty personality, splendour of imagination, and their speech is beautiful. And so Haydn, Mozart and Handel are simple by comparison with Beet-

hoven and Bach; but there are the greatness of human nature, the startling originality of genius and the charm of beautiful expression in them all.

Too many of our moderns, critics and composers, forgetting the prime elements—the quality of the personality that speaks in the language of music and the beauty of the speech—think that they shall be heard for the intricacy, the grotesqueness, the complexity of their expression. They are apt to mistake oddness of manner for the arresting appearance of genius; affectation for originality of conception; singularity of emotion for the grand human passion which touches the heart of the world. They seem to force themselves to produce something queer and complicated but not beautiful, and confound the travail of their souls with artistic imagination. These are some of the critical reflections which come into the mind when comparing a great portion of our modern music with the music of the masters. And the results are the natural outcome of false theories of art. The upward path is in this instance the backward path. Higher leadings can be gained only by that appreciative study of the old music which will convince of the truth of the principles that music is a self-contained language able to express human personality, adequately, definitely and with delicacy; that it is a language too subtly beautiful and concerned with

what is too immaterial to be translated into the terms of the coarser language of words; and that it is the natural and beautiful expression of noble personality. It is quite refreshing to turn from Mr. William Wallace to Mr. Felix Weingartner, and to hear his appreciations of what is great and his condemnations of what is small. "At all times, and from every point of view, simplicity will have a happy, animated effect." . . . . "Masterpieces, of which a large number will never grow old, but will so charm us by their freshness that we always believe we are hearing them for the first time, sprang from the sunny, childlike natures of Haydn and Mozart." . . . . "But monotony which comes from excessive complication will first attract our thought and investigation, will then tire us, and at last produces the art-killing poison of boredom." Then, after commenting upon the complications and mannerisms of Brahms, he says: "He could only assume the mask. In his works, in spite of outward similarity, we find only the abstract idea, while in Beethoven's music is revealed the real essence of music. Brahms's music, as a whole—if I may be allowed the expression—is scientific music, a playing with tone forms and phrases, but not that most expressive and comprehensible world language which our great masters could and had to speak; that language which arouses us and strikes to our

very souls, because we recognise in it our own joys and our own sorrows, our own struggles and our own victories. Brahms is artificial. Their music is artistic." In all this Weingartner shows that he has the ability to think and to criticise; that he has the courage to stand aside, to keep himself aloof from the current of popular opinion, and to say boldly and emphatically what he believes. And on a far different threshold from that of Mr. William Wallace, Weingartner imagines for a moment what will be the stamp and character of the composer of the future: "I think of him as having a strong human personality, not as national or as belonging to any party, because music is a universal art. I picture him as inspired with a glowing enthusiasm for what the great minds of all times and all nations have produced, and having an invincible aversion to mediocrity." . . . . "I see him wandering, as it were, in an Alpine region, with his gaze constantly fixed on the highest peak, towards which he is always advancing." . . . . "To only a few is it permitted to wander on the highest summits of humanity, and this 'superhuman' state cannot be constructed, learned or acquired. It comes only as a transcendent gift from the regions above." . . . . "The appearance of that new composer will be a question of personality and not of education. His ideas, his inspirations, must come from life." . . . .

"But will that loftiness, that charm, that strength and sweetness of spirit, by which our great masters were characterised, return to-day upon the basis of the modern philosophy of life? Although the answer must be left to the future, we may say that if the feelings, the thought, the ideas, be as great and noble as those of the great masters, then the music will be right. But if not, then, whether you mount Pelion on Ossa, whether you write for a thousand trombones and for two hundred thousand kettledrums; nothing will result but a bogy." . . . . "If we come down from imagination to reality, everywhere we notice a pulsating, restless activity, an uncertain groping after dim objects, a hankering for success and celebrity at all costs and by any means. 'Progress,' 'hitherto unheard of originality,' 'precursor,' 'founder of a new school,' 'superseded standpoint'—these are many of the catchwords which strike our confused ear."

Weingartner is not an old-fashioned pedant. He knows all the music of the moderns, and he has grasp enough of the general principles of true art to be able to discriminate between what is meretricious and what is of everlasting worth. And it is because he knows so much and has wide sympathies, that his views are so valuable. Still, it is not for a moment to be thought that any wholesale sweeping condemnation of modern music is intended.

Nothing of the sort! That there are beautiful inspirations in the music of our time, inspirations in which the eternal triad of true art principles—beautiful personality, lucid design and exquisite workmanship—are to be found, no one dare deny. Are there not such inspirations in the music of Tchaïkovsky, Dvorák, Grieg, Saint-Saëns, Liszt, Mahler and many others? Assuredly there are, and let us be thankful for them; but exquisite moments of brightness do not change winter into spring; nor do these glimpses of beauty chase away the shadows which hang over the "threshold" of modern music. It would do us all good to hark back again to the seraphic personality and the perfect art of Mozart, of whom it may well be said:

"All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass."

There is left, finally, for our consideration, perhaps the most remarkable and the most impressive of all the personalities in music. Beethoven was magnificently apart from them all. Unlike Bach, who, with all his intense intellectual absorption and his profound emotion, yet kept himself detached from the stir of life, aloof from the conflicts of the world; unlike Handel, who, while he mingled with the busy life of men, yet went on his joyous way with majestic confidence and kingly

dignity; unlike Mozart, who, although he encountered all the fiery trials which this life has in store for the genius of angelic sensibility, kept his serene spirit and his seraphic countenance of beauty untouched by the stain of conflict; unlike them all, Beethoven presents the aspect of a rugged giant, tried to the uttermost by a mighty struggle with the perplexing problems of life and the deep passions of humanity, but nobly and grimly determined to fight his battles without fear, and to come forth victor at the last. Yet, in spite of his sore conflict with the desolations of a world sorrow, he, too, has something of the intellectual intensity of Bach, something of the majesty of Handel, something of the ineffable beauty of Mozart, and withal, a rugged strength and dignity and trumpet-tongued eloquence of his own besides. "Deeper than ever plummet sounded" he has fathomed the passionate sorrows of the human heart. He is the poet of spiritual conflict, and his finest songs are songs of sorrow. You have only to look at the face of the man to see how, in strength, in intellect, in determination, in nobility of character, he stands far above the common race of mortals. "There were giants in the earth in those days."

It is very interesting to observe how the characters of men, and the character of their works, are shown in their faces. A possession of abiding charm is a

photographic album of the faces of all our great musicians, both composers and performers. The variety of human character there portrayed furnishes matter for highly instructive thought and criticism. But the most arresting feature of all is the way in which the really great composers stand out from all the others as if they were creatures of another sphere. The smaller men look like dwarfs beside giants. And in no point is this differentiation so strongly marked as in the far-seeing look in the eye, as if those mighty hearts have been permitted to penetrate with seer-like vision into domains beyond the ken of human sight. The face of Bach is stamped with the image and superscription of his solitary and intense intellectual absorption; the face of Handel pictures the man of joyous confidence and august dignity, of a mind "arrayed in Olympian thunders, vast lord of the spheres"; the face of Mozart shows the sweet and serene spirit of the eternal child whose eyes for ever looked on beauty; and the face of Beethoven shows, with the traces of a thousand sorrows, the marks of indomitable energy, of unconquerable determination, of the impassioned imagination of one who saw in suffering what he told in song. And there is no more certain guide to the measure of the art of our time than a comparison of the faces of the giants of those days with the faces of the men who now write

our music. One look is enough; it tells more than many pages of writing.

Statham is right in saying that "Mozart is the more perfect artist, but Beethoven is the more intense and passionate poet, and humanity has answered to his call." It is this full acquaintance of Beethoven with the manifold passions of men that makes his music so acceptable and so affecting to those who suffer. And which of us is immune?

Beethoven and Mozart are interesting examples of two entirely different classes of genius—the one sometimes vanquished by their own sorrows and emotions, the other always victor; the one who, suffering beyond the power of quiet endurance, sometimes show an agonised, a tumultuous spirit in their works; the other, who, though their afflictions be as great, endure with a strength above the reach of tumult and a hope never to be intruded upon by despair. If we accompany Beethoven through his spiritual experiences it is not easy to help being thrilled, body and soul, by his huge sorrows. He himself trembled. We experience his sorrows again, we struggle with him, we are vanquished as he was, for we cannot choose but feel as he felt; and now and again we share with him some consolation which, while he was victor over his own heart's passion, came to him and soothed his grief. Whosoever goes to the militant heroes of earth for

sympathy, must endure the agonies of their tribulation, must be refined by the fierce fires of their woes, before he can gain the full consolation of their final peace. William Watson, himself one of the militant aspirers, thus describes with telling sympathy the character of Beethoven's suffering:

> "Thine seemed angel's grievings, as of one
> Strayed somewhere out of heaven, and uttering
> Lone moan and alien wail."

Mozart is the typical representative of the other class of genius, that which is always victor. He, too, was not ignorant of the woes of the world; yet, from his music, you would say that their weight never had power to subdue his soaring spirit. With him we do not go through the fiery furnace, we do not tremble, we do not fight his battles; we have but to take an angel's sympathy, and by it to add brightness to our life. The beauty of his music, so ethereal in quality, is "a broken light" of the eternal beauty.

There have been many tributes of praise poured out upon the personality and music of Beethoven, but few are more eloquently appreciative than that of Dannreuther nearly forty years ago in "Macmillan's Magazine": "Taking him all in all, he appears to have lived through much lonely misery and pain, much discomfort, vexation and anxiety,

with that sort of heroic resignation which Carlyle sets down as the highest thing attainable in this world of physical want and mental distress. At intervals the spirit of some of his last works have risen to something like the mental quiet and the emotional exaltation of a saint." . . . . "Before long it will be universally recognised that he has widened the sphere of men's emotions in a manner akin to that which the conceptions of great philosophers have widened the sphere of men's intellectual activity." . . . . "He passes beyond the horizon of a mere singer or poet and touches upon the domain of the seer and prophet, where, in unison with all genuine mystics and ethical teachers, he delivers a message of religious love and resignation, of identification with the sufferings of all living creatures, depreciation of self, release from the world."

We thought that we had done with Mr. William Wallace, but we find that the vision of himself and his friends "aches and strains" as it soars, to the contemplation of that time when, in the "progress" of music, Bach and Handel, Mozart and Beethoven, will be swallowed up by oblivion, or remain in the memory of man only as "archæological specimens." "Now," he says, "we are referred to Brahms, Beethoven and Bach." . . . . "What is it that makes the oldest school obsolete? Is it not that which will make the later school obsolete in a very short time?"

. . . . "The day is bound to come when Mozart's work will be as interesting an archæological specimen as that of Busnois's is now." Heaven help that day! Surely this man is simply trying to say something on the same principle as the fat boy in "Pickwick." Surely his idea is: "I wants to make your flesh creep." We cannot understand him on any other grounds. Is Homer an archæological specimen? Isaiah? Phidias or Praxiteles? Are Titian, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci, archæological specimens? Sophocles, Virgil, Horace, Dante, are they? Are any of those masterpieces of art upon which mankind has long set the seal of its approbation, archæological specimens? Those masterpieces are not dependent for their eternal vitality and freshness upon the transitory fashions of any age or the personal idiosyncrasies of any critic. "*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*" Age cannot wither or custom stale the eternal youth of their beauty.

Why Mr. Wallace is afflicted by such nightmares of thought concerning the art of the world is, that the prolonged habit of concentrating his vision upon the increasing complexities of modern musical devices—complexities of design, complexities of harmonic progression, complexities of orchestral resource, has led him to confound these changing forms with the eternal verities, and to regard this

increasing complexity as the hall-mark of true progress in musical art.

Science progresses: the knowledge of to-day tumbles the science of yesterday into the oblivion which is accorded to ignorance. But the masterpieces of art do not, throughout the whole of history, furnish us with a record of any such progress. The forms of art change; its modes of expressing a personality become more complicated, more powerful and more delicate; but its onward, as distinguished from its changing, course, is bounded by the limits of human personality, and of finished workmanship. Where the personality is noble, the design of beautiful proportions, and the workmanship exquisite, whether it be poetry, painting, sculpture or music, the result is a masterpiece which is as eternally fresh as is the face of the forest in the "leafy month of June."

The hope for the future does not lie in scorn for the past. Beethoven offers better counsel than that: "I should advise a composer rather to be commonplace than far-fetched in his ideas or bombastic in his expression of them." If we study the lives of the great creative geniuses of the world, and especially of the men of genius in music, we shall find that their greatness was reached by reverent regard for all that was great which preceded them. Reverence was one of the old standards of greatness;

scorn is one of the modern tendencies towards degeneracy:

> "You may flout convention and scout tradition,
> With courage as great as your art is small
> Where the kings of the mind with august submission,
> Have bowed to the laws which outlast us all."

The essential things are: noble personality, beautiful design and exquisite workmanship, these three; and the greatest of these is splendour of personality.

III.

Instrumental Programme Music : A Criticism.

AS is the case with many interesting subjects, programme music has been the occasion of endless discussions and of endless books, from the sane arguments of the philosophic Hanslick to the rhapsodical utterances of Liszt and the American enthusiast, Richard Baxter Perry. There are, on the one side, clear-headed sceptics; and, on the other, imaginative devotees. And the question is yet as far as ever from a settlement satisfactory to both parties. One of the latest and one of the most voluminous books about programme music is that by Professor Niecks, of Edinburgh University. He is one of those examples, happily not so rare now as in the days of our forefathers, of a musician who combines with scholarly musicianship, general culture, broad sympathies, literary taste and

thoughtfulness. It would not have been easy, in the days when the study of music was regarded as all-sufficient for the musician, to find such a group of cultured men as Sir George Grove, Edward Dannreuther, Sir Hubert Parry, Mr. Hadow, Professor Niecks, and other representatives of the new school who believe in the cultivation of the whole man, and who have done much to redeem the calling of the professional musician from the contempt in which it was often held by those who pursued a more liberally learned walk of life.

Whatever Professor Niecks writes about he makes interesting; whatever he writes contains information well put and worth reading whether we agree with what he says or not. So is it with the volume on "Programme Music of the Last Four Centuries," in which diverse readers will find much to support their views on the subject treated, whether they be zealous for, or zealous against the use of "programmes" in the composition of instrumental music.

Unfortunately Professor Niecks has formulated for himself a general definition of programme music, so wide, so all-embracing, so foreign to the common use of the term, that while the inclusion of so much makes the book the more interesting as a history of the art, it detracts from its usefulness as a work on programme music distinctively and is not at all helpful towards a solution of this vexed problem.

Our author will have nothing to do with the ordinary definitions of programme music. He says that they are too narrow and that there is not a correct definition extant. It is at once evident that he is going to use this word, not in the usual sense, but in some comprehensive Nieckian sense of his own. So he tells us that he includes music of all "possible kinds, degrees and characters"; music with a programmatic title and music without one. So difficult is it for the human mind to free itself from the notion that its convictions are unprejudiced that Professor Niecks starts by telling us that his enquiry is impartial. And yet he promptly proceeds to denounce all the common notions of programme music; he promptly proceeds to force all composers into his true fold whether they will or no; and, finally, he declares that "there is no such thing as absolute music," and that to him "at least it is clear and certain that all good music has a programme."

The result of Professor Niecks's strange enquiry, conducted on this curiously "impartial" method, is to turn away his own mind, and doubtless the minds of some of his readers, from the highest conceptions of the essentials of true musical art, and to direct the attention to the lower phrase of programmatic music. His history, in which the "programmatic" and the "absolute" aspects of music are as much as

possible merged into one, is very likely to prove mischievous by making it seem as if the natural, the general, the historical trend of musical composition, even in its finest examples, was in the direction of what is known as programme music—a view which is contrary to the facts of the case as they are interpreted by those who regard absolute music as by far the worthier of the two kinds. The only historical enquiry which is likely to shed light on the subject is a separate examination and comparison, on the one hand, of what is commonly known as programme music, and, on the other, of what is commonly known as absolute music. And, I doubt not, that the result of such an examination and comparison will show to the programmatic devotee "his mounted scale aloft." Then, if he were to follow the example of the "Fiend," who "fled murmuring," with him would flee the "shades of night" which are now hanging over the beautiful art of music.

At the outset it is necessary to determine upon the common acceptation of the terms "programme music" and "absolute music." Then it will be easy to separate music into its classes, to form a comparative view of the intrinsic value of each class and thus to formulate a truer conception of good music.

Grove's Dictionary (first edition) says: "Pro-

gramme music is an epithet originally intended to be applied to that small but interesting class of music which, while unaccompanied by words, seeks to portray, or at least suggest to the mind, a certain definite series of objects or events."

Riemann's Dictionary says: "Programme music is music which is said to be intelligible as a representation, in somewhat close detail, of a subjective or objective event."

Dannreuther, in the sixth volume of the "Oxford History of Music," in his chapter on programme music, explains it as "the desire to bring about some sort of direct alliance of instrumental music with poetry; to lay stress upon the conjunction of music with some particular poem or some special order of ideas, and in the construction of the music to rely directly on suggestions received from literary or other non-musical sources." He then calls the result of this method of work "a curious hybrid—music posing as an unsatisfactory kind of poetry."

Heathcote Statham, in "My Thoughts on Music and Musicians," describes this class of music as "music intended to express a definite idea or phenomenon which could otherwise be described in words."

These definitions, including as they do both the old and more objective programme music and the newer developments in this direction, may be re-

garded as differentiating pretty clearly the first class of music.

On the other hand, in defining "absolute music," Riemann says: "It is opposed to music-painting, to presentative or programme music, to music supposed to represent something definite." "It is music *per se*." "When music becomes symbolic it goes beyond its own domain and enters that of poetry or of the representative arts."

Sir Hubert Parry, again, in the third volume of the "Oxford History of Music," says on this subject that "When music is unaided by stage representation it must justify itself by inherent interests of all kinds, by artistic qualities of design, style and treatment, and by such clear indications of mood and emotion as shall require no accessories or signposts to show what was intended."

It is doubtful whether any writer ever gave a more truly enlightening exposition of the matter than Dr. Hanslick in his work entitled "The Beautiful in Music." In his opinion the object of music is to be beautiful, not to have an intention or a programme, not to express definite objective or subjective things. "If," he says, "instead of looking for the expression of definite states of mind, or certain events in musical works, we seek *music* only, we shall then, free from other associations, enjoy the perfections it so abundantly affords. Wherever

musical beauty is wanting, no meaning, however profound, which sophistical subtlety may read into the work, can ever compensate for it; and where it exists, the meaning is a matter of indifference. It directs our musical judgment, at all events, into a wrong channel."

Or, as Heathcote Statham, an eminently sane and able critic, puts the case: "The very object of music is to express something which cannot be expressed in any other way; and the best music of this class is that which is furthest removed from anything like imitative effort, and may be enjoyed purely for its own sake without a thought of any arbitrary meaning tacked on to it."

These definitions and expressions of opinion are sufficient to make quite clear the distinction between the two classes of music, and to enable the student of history to separate musical literature rightly, each composition into its own class.

I think it will be evident to any unprejudiced reader of Professor Niecks's work, upon a review of the whole field of which he treats, that even upon his own showing, in proportion to the definiteness or to the frequency of programmes is the weakness or the badness of the music; and, conversely, in proportion as programmatic intentions are absent the tendency of music is rather towards what is beautiful. In other words, as programmes come

in, music goes out. "The tendency to employ music in what may be called the punning imitation of concrete ideas or phenomena appears to me," says Statham, "so far from extending the domain of music, to be one of the many indications that the art has nearly run its course and is now in its decadence." And Dannreuther in reviewing his survey, says: "Gradually poetical intentions took the lead; and composers began to accept relaxations of the laws of structure. After a time illustration became the ideal and symphonic music was transformed into programme music. At first the aim seemed to be freedom in matters of form only. But with this freedom the door was opened to sheer eccentricity and ugliness of theme." And the fact that as programmes came in, music went out, is well expressed in the following description of one of our latest composers: "Tuneless, keyless, formless, giving a background for something that does not appear."

Before marshalling in review the composers of these two classes of music and making a comparative judgment of the worth of their work, it is well to hear the judgments of some of our greater composers upon this very subject of the legitimacy of programme music at all. And at the same time it is amusing to notice the ardour of Professor Niecks in his attempts to enrol these composers on the pro-

grammatic side of the question in spite of his prefatory declaration of impartiality. This is how he deals, for example, with Chopin. He tells us, first, that "Not a single one of his compositions has a programme prefixed to it, or bears a title indicative of one; and a search among his letters yields but a very poor outcome." Are we then to suppose that Chopin was a composer of absolute music? Not at all. He must be brought into the true fold at all costs. How is this to be done? The fact is that the text of this book is—look for programmes everywhere, and if you are imaginative enough you will find them; or if you cannot find them legitimately, invent them so that you may have on the side of programme music all the composers of good music, and thus prove that the programmatic is the true view of musical art. This is how he enrolls Chopin in his band of true believers. "*If our imaginations are sufficiently alert*," he naïvely remarks, "we can discover the clinking of spurs, the rattling of sabres and the trampling of horses." And, all the evidence being to the contrary, he sums up his conclusion with this clinching argument: "Being a tone-poet, and as having something to communicate, Chopin must be in some way or other a composer of programme music"!

Take the case of Schubert, again. Rank heretic though he appear to be, yet room must be made

somehow for him, too. "No accounts or rumours of concealed programmes have been submitted to us by the composer's friends and biographers," the Professor tells us. "Yet all this, however, does not dispose of the possibility, or even of the probability, that Schubert may not have been after all a composer of purely instrumental programme music." What is to be done with a writer such as this, who first formulates a definition of his subject which embraces nearly all music in the world, no matter how it has been separated into classes by other men; and, secondly, in spite of the absence of all evidence which could include the music of any given musician, says simply that the absence of all evidence which could compel his inclusion does not make it even probable that he should be excluded!

Next comes Schumann. First, we have the composer's own views quoted at some length: "It has often seemed to me silly when somebody asked me what I was thinking about in writing my own extravagant outpourings. Therefore I do not want an answer." Again: "Beethoven very well understood the risk he ran in writing the 'Pastoral' Symphony. In the few words which he prefixes—expressive of the emotions rather than painting—there lies a whole system of æsthetics for composers." And, speaking of Berlioz's programme of his "Symphonie Fantastique," Schumann remarks: "Such sign-posts

have always something unworthy and charlatan-like about them." Professor Niecks's unconsciously-humorous answer to all this is that "Schumann is evidently struggling with a prejudice"; but I, quite impartial, decide that Schumann cannot and will not be left out in the cold. Schumann does not make a bad attempt to manage his little "prejudice" when he adds: "If only there remains music and independent melody, do not rack your brains, but enjoy." "Heavens, will the time never come when we are no longer asked what we intended by our divine compositions?"

Dannreuther, in his volume of the "Oxford History," remarks that "Mendelssohn's aversion to anything resembling a detailed programme came out very clearly in his sarcastic answer to a question as to the 'meaning' of 'Melusina': 'Hm—does my music hint at a *mésalliance?*'" And Professor Niecks tells us, also, that "in Mendelssohn's reply to a correspondent who wanted to know what some of the 'Songs Without Words' meant, the composer declined to give the desired information." Dannreuther's critical comment on Mendelssohn's music is: "The music is meant to tell its own tale in purely musical terms and on purely musical lines." Mr. Niecks takes quite a different view. Mendelssohn is not to escape from his grasp, and so we are told that "he is an extremely inconvenient

fact for the opponents of programme music." One of Professor Niecks's errors is this: he mistakes the firing of the imagination by a scene of beauty, a deed of splendour, a romance of power, for the making out of a programme to represent the thing that fired the imagination. The soul of every poet is aroused by beauty and splendour; but although these may stimulate his imagination it does not at all follow that he sets himself to make a realistic portrayal of the scene, the deed or the romance. The imaginative creations of a composer may not have any direct bearing upon the inspiring causes which affected his emotional nature or exalted his imagination. Professor Niecks fancies that whatever stimulated the imagination constitutes a sort of programme by which the music produced at that time should be explained.

And what does the modern, Wagner, say upon this subject of programmes in instrumental music? "In instrumental music I am a conservative." "I dislike everything that requires a verbal explanation beyond the actual sounds." Even Niecks says: "Did not Wagner condemn programme music?" "No doubt he did." Dannreuther tells us that in his judgment Wagner's own purely instrumental pieces are a practical illustration of these views of his. Niecks himself is apparently forced to the conclusion also that Wagner's "independent orchestral

works are *to all appearance* of the absolute kind." How, then, is this great man to be enfolded? Our author has much to say. First, he tells us that Wagner wrote too much of his views about music; secondly, that "the great poet-musician deludes himself and others" in what he says; and, thirdly, that "however much he repudiated his inclusion in the ranks of composers of programme music, he must nevertheless have a place assigned to him there; for he is perhaps the most powerful composer of programme music." One might recall once again that charmingly naïve statement: "If the imagination is sufficiently alert."

We may conclude this part of the subject by a very sensible remark of Tchaïkovsky's when speaking of one of his symphonies: "It is quite impossible to formulate its programme in words; it would have a ludicrous effect and give rise to ridicule. But should not a symphony express all that cannot be expressed in words, but which fills the soul and calls for expression?" There he touches the root of the matter. Either fine music is an art complete in itself, expressing something beyond the power of words to reveal, or else, if we require for the explanation of its significance, a word story, it is really no artistic or necessary branch of art, but rather a redundancy, a thing unable to fulfil its own legitimate functions. If, on the contrary, its province

is to express things too intangible for words, too impalpable to be expressed by any other medium; if its province is to express the spiritual moods of the soul, to express personality in its most immaterial and beautiful form, then it is no longer a redundancy, but one of the most powerful instruments of appeal to the spiritual and nobler part of man.

If, now, we range on one side the composers of what is commonly known as programme music, and, on the other, the composers of absolute music, with the object of making a comparative judgment between the two classes, and thus obtaining a truer view of the essentials of fine music, what shall we find? Professor Niecks has summoned up out of the shadowy past a host of names to illustrate the historical continuity of programmatic champions. His early names and early lists are both numerous and practically unknown. The programmes were definite, detailed, suggestive; but the music was puerile, dry, silly. Who remembers Jannequin, Gombert, Lemlin, Scandelli, Banchieri, Krieger, Cimello, Trojano, Striggio, Marnezio, Mundy, Dowland, Poglietti, Gaultier, De Chambonnieres, Daquin, Dandrieu, and a hundred others who simply revelled in the composition of works which were intended to present some definite programme in their music? To all of them time has accorded a just

oblivion. If there can be any good purpose served by the resuscitation of their names and their musical programmes, it can only be to show how true it is that as programmes come in, music goes out. But, it will be retorted, these are men who belonged to the days of the infancy of music, men who wrote before the possibilities of musical art were even guessed at, and to condemn programmatic music because of their puerilities would be entirely unfair. It is enough, however, to glance through the pages of Professor Niecks's book to find, marshalled in a long line throughout the years, the names of scores of obscure composers and their forgotten works, who swell the warning lists of that worthless programmatic music which soon falls into disrepute. Let us pass them by, and look at some of the more celebrated representatives of the later programmatic school: the subjective, poetic school of composers, who would be ashamed to be numbered in the ranks of the more objective and childish programme writers. What do their works say for them? Liszt is one of the programmatic heroes of Professor Niecks, and we shall be content to accept the Professor's own deliberate judgment. He says: "Important as Berlioz is in the development of programme music, Liszt is far more so. Indeed, he is the most important of all." Then, after a long discussion of his works, he calmly informs us that

"The ugly has a greater space given to it than in any other composer's creations." And, again: "An improvising manner often bordering on incoherence is a characteristic of most of Liszt's work." And, finally, in a short summary of the whole matter, he adds: "Although Liszt's symphonic compositions have been before the public for about half a century, they have not become popular. I do not think that the verdict thus given will be reversed. Their shortcomings are too many and too serious; they contain far too much crudity, hollowness, ugliness!" And yet Liszt is "the most important example of all" in the development of modern programme music. Does it not strike the Professor that this account, not an isolated one either, furnishes a striking lesson to all musicians? Does he not see that it goes to show that the cultivation of this modern fad of programmatic work in music is turning the attention of composers from the essential difference of all the great art of the world, and concentrating it on an aspect whose tendency is to lead to what is bizarre and ugly?

The present-day tendency is to minimise the importance of beauty of design, and to emphasise inordinately the value of emotional content. "To talk of a musical composition as making up for deficiency in form by its poetic impulse, as is expressed in modern criticism, is to talk nonsense. Art *is*

form, and to imagine anything worth the name of art as produced by poetic impulse apart from form is irrational." To be beautiful is the first business of all art. In proportion to its beauty is its influence and its immortality; in proportion to its ugliness is its failure. That is what the composers of to-day are forgetting in their enthusiasm to espouse the new doctrine of programmaticism. Most of the artistic works to which has been accorded by the universal consent of able critics, as well as by the general voice of cultured mankind, the highest place, has been art which expressed in a beautiful form some great and noble personality. It was beautiful in form, and it was created by a personality which was of unique and extraordinary force. And it was natural: it was not the result of an attempt to fall in with some new theory, or of trying to appear original. A consideration of these facts will help to show how it is that so much of the music of our day compares very unfavourably with the great examples of the past. We are trying to set up an artificial ideal; we are trying to twist and turn our tones to effect the useless and impossible task of making the music do what it is the business of words or pictures to do. And this false ideal, so far from helping to make music more beautiful in form or character, is leading to what is ill-proportioned, ill-designed, ugly and often grotesque.

We hope to be original; we want badly to be original; we strive to be original by some means or other. And as the wonderful melody of the old days, as the beautiful form of the old days, as the beautiful personality of the old days, seem to be quite out of our reach, we think we shall attain the originality we desire by following the various fantasies of programmatic suggestion, and excusing the lack of beauty in our compositions on the ground of its superior exuberance of emotion or its "poetic content." Originality is always natural. If we are not possessed of a great personality, of a personality which, by expressing itself naturally, expresses itself originally, then no effort on our part will produce the result we desire. And if we cast aside the canons of the past; if we magnify the "content" at the expense of the form; if we at last hit upon some method of composing intelligible programme music, what have we gained? We have simply shown that music is no longer required, and that the sooner it takes its departure to another sphere the better. For, as Oliver Wendell Holmes well says: "Music can be translated only by music. Just so far as it suggests verbal thought, it falls short of its high office."

When we now let the whole grotesque array of these programmatic composers stand aside, and summon in their stead the representatives of absolute

music, what do we find? We find ranged on our side in this controversy, the five great kings of music, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Even our omnivorous Professor cannot get much hold on them. True, to be sure, he makes much of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony; but that there is only one example to be found is surely an argument which tells with tremendous force against the Professor's contention. Statham, in commenting upon the most programmatic parts of that symphony, says: "This most distinctly is not music; it is a gross æsthetic falsity, and it is a thousand pities that Beethoven should have lent the sanction of his great name to such a procedure." These five kings of music were great personalities; they were artists at design; they loved what was beautiful; and they were natural in the expression of themselves. And so, when a great critic is lamenting the melancholy spectacle of music as a decadent art, he consoles himself by the reflection that "At least music has left us a noble legacy—a possession for ever, one may hope—in the wonderful collection of works which have been poured out for us by these great masters of music."

If we are again to have fresh periods of greatness in music, they will be most likely to arise by studying with reverence the character of that, the finest music of the world; by appreciating its ethereal

quality; by understanding it as a treasure-house of abstract and idealized beauty; by recognising that it is a beautiful exposition of fine personality; and by trying to follow in the paths where it leads. No more can come out of a man than is in him. It is well to remember this. Genius, grandeur of personality, love of beauty, strength, naturalness; these are some of the attributes of those who compose the music which the world does not "willingly let die." Have our present-day composers these attributes? If they have they will then, as all the great artists of the world, pour out spontaneously, naturally, what is beautiful. If they have not, they will try still to persuade themselves that the art of the past is antiquated; that some fresh theory is the only thing to create a new epoch; and they will be apt to mistake the labour of producing work in the terms of this new theory as a sign of something of fresh value apart from the question of the beauty, the form, the naturalness, the character of personality, which is exhibited in these new-fangled creations.

But apart altogether from the comparative value of the two classes of music—the programmatic and the absolute—there is another strong argument against the programmatic theory. It is this. If we exclude childish, objective programmes, and confine ourselves to supposed programmes illustrative

of dramatic passion, of feelings produced by various agencies, of stories of states of mind and such phenomena, we are at once met by the difficulty of making the music correspond in any intelligible manner with the programme on which it is imagined to be founded. Doubtless, given a programme to start with, and given an imagination, as Professor Niecks suggests, "sufficiently alert," one might make an attempt to follow it. But without this appointed programme, given the imagination sufficiently alert, the fact is, that anyone could read or hear into any music any programme which it was his fancy to invent. Even then, it would but take his attention off the music, which is the only thing worth attention if it is good. The more intellectual and the more musical the hearer, the less does he want to be disturbed by any programme; and the less intellectual and musical the hearer, the more readily will he be satisfied with any programme set before him; for all he desires is that his imagination be sufficiently alert to follow the correct story of the music.

If anyone has the wish to find out truly whether there is any intelligible definite intention or programme in the instrumental works of any of our great composers, or indeed in the purely instrumental music of any composer, there is a very simple way of testing the matter. Take any composition

unknown to your audience, or any composition, titled or untitled, of whose name and supposed programme they are ignorant; and then, without any leading suggestions, get every member of that audience to record his impression. Wherever such a course has been pursued the results have proved so entirely contradictory as to furnish proof positive of the utter indefiniteness of these programmatic intentions; while the greater number of the hearers tell us that they hear the music and nothing else. "It is an inherent weakness of programme music that in general no one fits the intended idea to it without prompting, and the same piece will suggest the most different ideas to different people." In one case about thirty people were asked to suggest the idea intended by a piece of programme music, and although they received considerable prompting, "none of them came anywhere near the idea labelled on it by the composer."

We are all familiar with the crude attempt of the little school-boy to draw a cow; and how, not quite satisfied that his effort would meet with the correct interpretation, he labelled it thus: "This is a cow." The same crude attempt attaches itself to programme music, and with the same diffidence of meeting with the correct interpretation, the composers wisely adopt the plan of the little school-boy and attach their interpretative label. But just as

with the school-boy, any other label would have served their purpose equally well and would have been equally appreciated by those who look not for music, but for programmes, and who have an imagination sufficiently alert to find them.

As to myself, I am one of those unfortunate musicians who hear what is set before them. If it is the tone of a piano, then it is the piano I hear, no matter what tone-qualities are suggested to me by the advocates of piano timbres; if it is a piece of music, then it is the music I hear, not a piece of poetry. While if it is a poetical composition or a picture that demands my attention, it is poetry or a picture that entirely engages me. The fashionable and indefinite mixture of one's impressions of what is before his attention; that ever-changing flux of kaleidoscopic nebulosities, instead of a definite impression of a definite thing which is before one, does not appeal to me at all. I have not, thank Heaven, an imagination "sufficiently alert."

Professor Niecks throughout his work gives us some amusing examples of the utter indefiniteness of these musical programmes. Although Haydn was supposed to have given the poet Carpini an interesting programmatic account of some of his symphonies, the connection between the programme and the music was so hazy that the poor man could by no means remember which symphony and which

story should be pieced together. Surely if there had been any definite, intelligible relation, it would have been possible to sort out these affinities in a decent and orderly manner. Then, again, speaking of Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 13, Professor Niecks remarks: "Beethoven's oracular utterance about two principles in the middle movement is not intelligible." Here we are supposed to have a programmatic explanation from the composer himself; and yet, so hazy, so indefinite, so uselessly nebulous, so utterly superogatory is this explanation, that our author pronounces it "unintelligible." What, then, must the ordinary programme be to the ordinary musician who listens to the music, if the utterance of Beethoven himself is unintelligible to the programmatic expert who has spent long years of labour trying to master the subject?

Enough has now been said to show, first, that Professor Niecks confused the whole question by making an arbitrary definition so wide that it covered the ground of the two classes of music commonly known as programme music and absolute music; to show, secondly, that this confusion, in the skilful hands of an ardent devotee of programme music, might appear to afford a plausible argument in favour of the false and dangerous contention that the natural, the general, the historical trend of musical composition was in the direc-

tion of programme music; thirdly, to show how clear-cut the real issue is, by sharply defining and differentiating the two classes of music; fourthly, to show the aversion of many great writers and composers to the theories and practice of programme music at all; fifthly, to show, by a comparative review of the music of the world, how feeble is the array on the programmatic side when compared with that of absolute music; sixthly, to show the evil tendency of this modern programmatic fad; and, seventhly, to show that the utter indefiniteness and unintelligibility of the programmes as they are embodied in the music should be argument enough, without anything further, to induce all wise musicians to abjure them.*

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* See Appendix at end of volume.

IV.

Classical and Romantic Piano-Playing.

MANKIND has a wonderful love for extremes. Perhaps it is because the golden mean lacks the characteristics which excite enthusiasm, because it tends to what is cold and half-hearted. Perhaps it is because most of the progressive revolutions of the world have been wrought by the force of passionate enthusiasm running riot against the crystallised formalism of existing things. But then, as soon as the excitements of the revolution have passed away, the new order becomes quietly the established order, and the time of the golden mean begins once more. And so, by billowy storm after billowy storm followed by seasons of calm, the world steps onward. But, it is to be remembered, all the finest of the art of the world in all ages is not the art of storm and revolution but the art of

the golden mean in which was combined at the same time the most beautiful exposition of human nature in forms of the loveliest design.

To-day we are witnesses of one of the periods of enthusiasm and extremes. It is the age of "individuality" run riot. Musical revolution is the mood of the moment, and in all musical art of to-day we are witness of an extremity of revolt against the formalism of a past day. And we are apt to class the calm of mental self victory attained by some of the great artists of the past as little better than formalism. Just as the French revolutionists would not be contented till they had cut off the heads of the aristocracy who represented to them the tyranny of cast, the tyranny of prejudice, the tyranny of authority; so many of our musicians are not content with any moderation in their revolt against the tyranny of formalism, but cry out, in their fervent enthusiasm, away with aristocratic design, majestic calm, melodious loveliness, in musical compositions: let our passionate and poetic individualities have free sway. And the same tendencies that dominate our musical compositions are alike to be seen in a good deal of the piano-playing which we hear. And yet, the beauty of all the ages lies in the golden mean. There is no beauty either in extreme formalism, or in wild excess of individual emotion.

It is worth while to examine the characteristics of

the two schools of piano-playing—the classic and the romantic. It is worth while to look carefully into the virtues and the faults of extremism in both schools, and by means of this review discover, if we can, that golden mean, without which there is no supreme art.

A calm, unprejudiced investigation of this kind is always the more difficult at a time when the opinion is in vogue, that what causes the greatest popular excitement of an emotional kind is likely to be the most powerful and the best of its kind to be had. Unless we can, in the course of such a review, lay down some fairly sound principles of interpretative art in whose truth our faith may rest assured, we must needs deliver over the kingdom of music to confusion, and commit our artistic judgment to the nearest and strongest personality under whose influence, for the time being, we happen to drift. No critic can judge intelligently, no listener can hear intelligently, unless he has some guide beyond the hypnotic influence of the performer.

A careful analysis of the characteristics of the two opposing schools of piano-playing will probably not only explain something of the conflict of opinion on the subject, but will also tend to show the superiority of the *via media.*

For years past the world of piano-players and critics of piano-playing has been divided into two

distinct and continually diverging classes. On the one side, there is the formal school, the school of precisionists, often called classical players. On the other side, there is the school of romanticism, of rhapsody, of impressionism; and of this latter school there is an offshoot which may be called the bravura-gymnasts. Each of these schools has a useful place in the economy of things. Each exercises a salutary and counteracting influence upon the limitations and excesses of the other.

In the days of long ago the school of classic conservatism reigned almost undisputed. The greater part of the music to be played was rather formal than emotional; and when music of a more emotional nature came into vogue, the older players too often kept rigidly to their stiffness, precision and formalism. Then as a revolt against what seemed heartless formalism, there came the passionate displays of the large-hearted liberationists of romanticism. So it is ever in this world. Sooner or later, whether it be in the realm of religion, or politics, or art, the soul of man breaks away from the trammels of conventional creeds; and the apostles of revolution lead the world into fresh paths where life seems warmer, fuller, more earnest. But it is to be remembered that in every revolution there is danger of excess. Besides the natural aspiration towards freedom and individuality, it happens very often that

love of change and fantastic novelty, desire to run counter to old tradition, anxiety for display, take hold of many radical minds. And thus the diverging issues of great reformers become exaggerated, and the paths are opened to folly and excess. There is no doubt that in the sphere of music the revolt of passionate romanticism was a genuine, earnest and irrepressible movement of warm-hearted emancipists. Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt and Rubinstein were among the emotional leaders of those who broke away from the more formal paths of Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Dussek, Clementi, Hummel, Cramer, Mendelssohn, and all those who loved the domains of quiet beauty, who were content to live in the sunshine of serenity undisturbed by the revolutions of the world.

The characteristics of each of these two classes among piano players will be the more readily apprehended by first naming some of the chief representatives of each school, and then by discussing their differences in some detail. The classical school of players may be represented by Bach, Mozart, Weber, Mendelssohn, Carl Reinecke, Sir Charles Hallé, Eugene D'Albert and many others. The point of divergence between the two schools may be represented by Beethoven, Chopin, Bülow and Busoni. Schumann and Rubinstein are typical examples of the daring pioneers of romanticism; while the modern

school of rhapsody, of athleticism, of bravura, of violent display of self, may be represented in its various aspects by such players as Liszt, Tausig, Rosenthal and Mark Hambourg.

Some of the distinguishing characteristics of the playing of any fine exponent of the classical school are these: an intellectual appreciation of structural beauty; emotional fervour, chastened, refined and restrained by discipline; a technique graceful and adequate, at once able to express all niceties of delicate detail and the grandeur of broad effects; and a loyal desire to understand and to interpret, as nearly as possible, the intention of the composer. By the classical artist a fine musical work is regarded as a structure, beautiful in its architectural proportions, wherein dwells a spiritual presence. In his playing he employs all the resources of his intellect and heart to the intent that he may reveal to his hearers the beauty of that form, both in the finish of its detail and in the fulness of its artistic unity; and that he may awaken in the hearts of his hearers a sympathetic response to the voice of the spirit which speaks in the music. And, as a true dramatist, he annuls himself, or rather identifies his personality with that of the composer, so that the spirit to be perceived may be that in the music, and not the ego of the interpreter.

Yet, in spite of such lofty ideals, the way of the

classic player is ever beset by the danger of pursuing too exclusively one or other of the constituent parts of a method so perfect as a whole. Love of neatness, daintiness, formal beauty, self-repression, not seldom lead to stiffness, to formality, to such a cold and mechanical exposition as one might look for in the wooden fingers of one of our modern pianolistic machines. In the directions of lifelessness and formalism lurk the chief perils of the classicist. Mechanical regularity pushed to extremes destroys the freedom which is ever an essential part of real beauty; and self-repression pushed too far silences the living voice within the music and leaves naught but cold sounds to fall upon the ear.

Quite different are the aims, the ideals and the extravagances of the modern romantic school of players. The first article of the creed of the real heart and soul romanticist is: "I believe in emotion." A free channel for the outpouring of his feelings is his keenest want; and in the music he plays he finds such a channel. As a means towards the attainment of his needs and ideals he cultivates a prodigious technique. He has an utter scorn for the ways of the classicist. He hates what seems to him cold self-repression, precise formalism, spirit-killing tradition, conventional interpretation. His attitude towards one of the compositions of any of the older masters is full of rapture, but rapture about him-

self. He says, "I have heard this over and over again, interpreted in accordance with the numbing rules of tradition; how can I, by new readings, make these dry bones live?" And so he resolutely sets himself to fulfil his fervent hope of resuscitating the soul of music by kindling every work with the glow of a passionate rapture.

The perils of the modern rhapsodist lie in the directions of vagueness, obscurity and exaggerated passion. And these perils are of a more insidious kind than the perils of the classical school of players, because they are perils which are part of the very atmosphere of our age, and because of the exciting effect exercised upon an audience by the enthusiastic outpourings of a passionate personality. And for the player himself, it may readily be perceived that the cultivation of his emotions and the outpouring of them in his playing are captivating pursuits, too apt to make him imagine that his performances are stamped with the hall-mark of inspiration and genius. By the fervour and fire of his own convictions, too, he beguiles his hearers into perfect confidence in him as the apostle of the true faith.

Intense egotism is at the bottom of it all. Both he and his audience too often forget that while the attitude of intense subjectivity may be legitimate where the performance is of a work composed by the player himself, it is far otherwise when the music

issues from the minds of several composers of diverse and singular personalities. For as a natural result of the over-cultivation and obtrusion of the subjective element, the individuality of each composer becomes merged into that of the player, with the result that one no longer hears the voice of Bach or Beethoven or Chopin, but a constant and monotonous reiteration of the voice of the egotist of the romantic school.

I once met with a spiritualist who had quite a distinctive personality; and after making his acquaintance I came to know a good deal of his ways of thinking and expressing himself. One day he lent me a little volume consisting of short essays which he said had been communicated to him through a medium from eminent literary men long ago departed this life. There were communications from Gibbon, Sam Johnson, Carlyle, Macaulay and other great men. He fully believed in the genuineness of these communications, and asked me for an opinion upon this sensational publication from the other world. I read the book, and I found that the only possible conclusion for a sane critic was, that if the communications were genuine, the personalities of all these widely different men had, upon their departure to another world, become entirely merged into the personality of the author of this little book. All individuality of style was gone, all individuality of

thought was gone, and I was wearied by the perpetual repetition of the views and expressions with which I had become only too familiar during my conversational intercourse with this odd man.

So it is with the obtrusively subjective player. The personalities of the great composers become merged into the personality of the player; and you become weary of the continual chatter of the same voice in your ears. Even suppose that the personality of this self-obtrusive player was commanding and impressive, its constant obtrusion would not long prove acceptable to those who set any high value upon their well-known friends the great musicians of the world.

As this subjective element increases, as the desire for vehement self-expression increases, so correspondingly does regard for the notation and intention of the composer decrease. Form becomes obscured as punctuation and delicate finish in the details are lost in the rush of emotional or technical display; intellectual lucidity and logical coherence are slighted as qualities too cold to be cultivated; and the player is often lost in the rapture of his own outpourings.

It is the day of impressionism. A wild daub with blurred outlines purporting to give a loose portrayal of a scene upon a most cursory examination, is the ideal of the advanced artists of this school. This

appears to be the method of some of our romantic players. But they quite forget that the great composers were not impressionists, and that the impressionist method of treating their works is simply an insult to their finished genius.

One other aspect of this modern romantic school of players deserves a notice. The fascination of *bravura* display proves another enticement from the path of real beauty in music. The magnificent technique acquired costs such a weight of labour in the attainment that it must be exhibited somehow. And so we hear these pianistic Hercules often making speed and noise their ideals. They take the music of the masters at such a pace that all delicate outlines are lost and all beauty is destroyed; and they hammer and bang at the piano until all its legitimate tones are drowned in the harsh twanging of the strings.

So while on the æsthetic side the drift is towards undisciplined emotion, on the athletic side it leads to the worship of technique. Franz Liszt is preeminently responsible for opening the road to glittering *bravura*. And it is glittering. There is something of the charm which one experiences at the sight of some magnificent spectacular display, upon an acquaintance with some of Liszt's extraordinary revels of sounds. Some of his rhapsodic pieces make quite a kaleido-auric display of rippling notes,

of sparkling octaves, of dainty snatches of melody, of chords crashing, of whispering echoes, of tones swelling from the faintest murmur to a multitudinous tumult of racing and rattling and surging and tumbling over one another in frantic sport. Small wonder, then, that after years of patient toil, after hard-won familiarity with the intricacies of these enchanting revels, after the enthusiastic plaudits of a thousand hands, the heart of the *bravura* player is gradually turned away from the quiet beauty, the intellectual majesty, the dignified and restrained spirit of the great music of the world, for whose adequate interpretation technique developed.

It is a common custom to point to crowds of hearers and to thunders of applause as the weightiest arguments in proof of the excellence of what may be under discussion. The apologists of the modern romantic school of players point to the size of the crowds who hear them and to the fervour of their applause. There are two good reasons for the crowds and for the applause, but neither of them involves the question of a fine type of art. First, the crowd is famous for its love of *bravura* display of any kind; and secondly, there are few influences so likely to excite the feelings of men and women as the unrestrained outpouring of emotion by a masterful spirit. Saint Beuve's critical question is for ever

needed: "Not, do I like it; but, ought I to like it?" As Augustine Birrell says, "If there is one thing to be dreaded in these matters, it is what is called the unaided intelligence of the masses." And again, speaking of taste in literature, "Beshrew the general public! What in the name of the Bodleian has the general public got to do with literature? It is not a question of the general public, but of the lovers of letters." But even if these romanticists choose to ground their claims to be regarded as great artists upon the crowds and the applause, how humiliating a place they must take when their audiences are pitted against the myriads who attend our football matches, our horse races, our boxing contests, our circuses! Not for the applause of undiscerning crowds did Phidias carve, did Raphael paint, did Bach compose. Their work was done for love of beauty and truth, and they have their reward on the throne of the immortals. It is the corporate voice of the thoughtful and critical few in each audience, in each community, in each nation, which slowly acts as a steadying and corrective influence upon public taste, which in the course of time permeates the whole of public opinion, and which finally records a just and irreversible judgment.

Sir Charles Hallé was a typical exponent of the older type of the classical school of player. When listening to his rendering of a Beethoven sonata, the

qualities to be noticed were these: limpid clearness and dainty finish in all technical execution; steady rhythm; conscientious attention to all the *nuances* of the composer; a dignified renunciation of all attempt to "play to the gallery"; a keen appreciation of the beauty of form; and a clear and logical exposition of the work, both by exquisite finish in the details of its separate parts, and by a strong grasp of the unifying principle which knit it together into a sequential and organic whole. There were no personal mannerisms; no *bravura* display; no violence with regard to contrasts of tone, accentuation, emphasis; no exaggerated variations of *tempo;* no expression of turgid emotion. In the stead of these there were a gentleman-like dignity and reserve, a quiet manner, an atmosphere of grace, serenity, beauty, sanity, lucidity and intellectual culture. There was an evident reverence for and an appreciation of the individuality of each composer; there was loyalty to the traditions of great interpretative artists; there was an assured faith that in the notation of the music some definite intention was clearly expressed, and that this intention could best be made known to his hearers by the repression of subjective fancies and passions, and by following with the nicest care what seemed to be the natural signification of the printed symbols. Had self-repression, in his case, not been carried to the verge of

coldness; had Hallé's expositions been kindled with more of the fire of Beethoven's energy, we should have had ideal renderings, giving full satisfaction to the whole artistic nature.

Mark Hambourg is an excellent warning example of the result of the modern romantic drift. He has quite a feverish anxiety to break away from all the restraints of tradition and to launch out into the trackless deep of emotional and athletic originality. He has a fervent faith in the outpouring of uncontrolled emotion and the parade of technical feats of legerdemain, as the essential elements of artistic greatness. His renderings are the very antithesis of those of Sir Charles Hallé, whom he probably holds in high scorn. Wherever a passage permitted of technical display, a marvellous display was made for the sake of the glitter; enormous speed was sought after as it is by the racing automobilist; unbridled liberties were taken with time, *tempi*, accent, emphasis, rhythm, punctuation, *nuances*. All daintiness, precision, accuracy, reserve, were cast away in favour of roughness, speed and impetuosity. The nice details of structural beauty were obliterated in the reckless rush after sensational effects; and the exposition of the whole work was without lucidity, coherence or unity. Self-obtrusion took the place of self-repression. The voice of Mark Hambourg drowned the voice of Beethoven. The

notation of the music was evidently regarded as a very hazy and indefinite sketch which was to be altered, amended and filled in, just as the capricious fancy and the fiery fervour of player dictated. And personal mannerisms were apparently cultivated in order to add further impressiveness to the sensational display. Yet I have seen the crowd dancing and clapping and shouting to this piping.

Take, again, the interpretation of the works of Chopin by Sir Charles Hallé and by Mark Hambourg. Hallé added, to the characteristics already mentioned, such freedom of movement in time and tone as might best express the ever-changing shades of emotion that flitted across the music as the drifting clouds flit across an April sky. And who could speak or act with greater authority on the subject of Chopinesque interpretation than Hallé. What other pianist with whose playing we are familiar has enjoyed, through the medium of an intimate friendship, so many opportunities of hearing Chopin play his own piano works; what other pianist has had his interpretations guaranteed as an exact exposition of the intentions of Chopin by the only absolute authority, the composer himself?

It is not very easy to recognise that the same pieces as those played by Hallé are intended to be played when one hears the renderings of Mark Hambourg. Here, in the treatment of the music of

this fellow romanticist, Chopin, all the extravagances already condemned break out with redoubled energy. Passion is torn to tatters. Every delicate change of time or tone is treated as if the most violent contrasts were ordered. Every *agitato* indication is the signal for a frantic rush. The whole performance seems impelled by demons of impetuosity and athleticism. Hallé played Chopin as if he loved him. Hambourg plays him as a big rough bruiser in a rage might be expected to cuff and knock about some delicate and gentle scholar who had roused his wrath. These young rhapsodists might well lay to heart the wise warning given by our great Chopin scholar, Frederick Niecks: "Chopin's purity of style, self-command and aristocratic reserve have to be quite especially noted by us who are accustomed to hear the master's compositions played wildly, deliriously, ostentatiously"; or that judicious comment of Cramer's on Chopin's own playing: "He plays beautifully and correctly, oh! so correctly, and does not give way to passion as other young men."

But the young innovators of to-day set up a defence for themselves. They tell us that all the seeming peculiarities, eccentricities and excesses in their playing may be at once explained and justified by the simple application of that accommodating term, "original readings." This defence is so plausi-

ble at first sight that it quite captivates, not only the uninitiated, but also many a half-educated musician. No matter how outlandish a performance may be, in broad outline or in detail; no matter how much any innovation or distortion is felt to be opposed to true art; it has its complete justification in that unimpeachable phrase. After a recital by one of these sensational players we often find the papers and the conversational atmosphere full of smug satisfaction. The poor composer is nothing; the player of original readings is the hero. "We care nothing for the artist, however talented, who is shackled by the slavery of mildewed tradition; we look for daring originality, for individuality and independence, for something living and inspiring, for passion, sentiment and the emotional temperament; for freedom and freshness of interpretation. Even the works of the greatest masters become tiresome when treated according to a fixed ideal which may or may not have been that of the composer." This is the kind of rubbish which has been offered as educatory criticism in one of the influential papers of one of the greatest cities in the empire.

If it is not arrant nonsense, then we are brought face to face with a grave dilemma. Either our musical notation, with all its wealth of expressive annotations, as elaborated by Beethoven and Chopin, is a fairly adequate and intelligible symbolism to

express their musical conceptions; or else it is a hazy, indefinite symbolism, expressing nothing clearly at all, and useful only in so far as it furnishes an elastic medium through which performers can conveniently give an exposition of their own notions and feelings. Should this latter view be the true view, then we have no great musical compositions at all. There are bequeathed to us only some shadowy suggestions capable of being twisted and turned into a myriad fantastic forms according to the caprice of each individual fancy. Is this likely; nay, is it credible? Before we consent to deliver over our magnificent literature and the whole kingdom of music to the chaos of these "original readers" of the romantic school and their apologists, let us ask ourselves whether it is possible that men of the intellectual calibre of Beethoven and Chopin did not thoroughly understand what they wanted to express, did not accurately appreciate the significance of the symbolism they selected, or did not know how to make their meaning intelligible. If the very asking of such a question were not answer enough in itself, further assurance may be found in the approval, by Beethoven and Chopin themselves, of the unaffected and obvious interpretation of their works given by such players as Czerny and Hallé. These players were not learned in the obscurities, affectations and excesses of our modern *bravura* rhapsodists; nor did

they aspire to any originality in their readings. For them it was counted honour enough to be humble interpreters of the music set before them, to the great satisfaction of the masters whose works they played.

And we have the further assurance that the modern rhapsodic school of players are wrong, in the playing of both Beethoven and Chopin. Beethoven's playing, although he was the most nobly passionate of all composers for the piano, was remarkable for its "masterly tranquility and refinement, without the slightest gesticulation, violence or exaggeration"; and Chopin's playing, although he was full of romance, was noted for its chasteness, its dignity, its reserve.

In an age which continually yearns after "daring originality," surely the "shackling tradition" of our great exemplars is the one chance of turning the wandering footsteps of our modern rhapsodists into the way of truth.

There is an illustration which will bring home to our minds the utter absurdity of mistaking the "original readings," and the extravagant performances of many of our modern players, for the light of fresh genius. What should we think if some foreigner, imperfectly acquainted with the construction and meaning of our English tongue, yet withal of a passionate temperament and master of a musical and expressive voice, were to appear before an

educated English audience posing as an original genius, "unshackled by the slavery of mildewed tradition"; what should we think if he were there to declaim with fervid gesticulation and amazing volubility some of the grand verses of Milton's "Paradise Regained," or some of the dainty lyrics of Keats or Tennyson, missing the rhythm and cadence of the versification, ignoring right punctuation, obscuring the structure of the lines and sentences, exaggerating or omitting emphasis as caprice dictated, filling the room with noise, and exciting astonishment at the speed of his enunciation? Should we calmly accept this declamation and this gesticulation as the outward and audible signs of an inward oratorical genius? Here we have the confidence of our opinions. Here we know the meaning, the form, the right sound of the verse; here we can at once decide, and decide rightly, whether a reading is intelligent, refined, sympathetic. And then recognising in a moment that the cause of all the grotesque misreading we have heard, results from the lack of correct knowledge and of sympathy with the spirit of the poetry, we do not hesitate to utter an unqualified condemnation. But where music is concerned we are not so sure of our ground; we are afraid to condemn what we feel to be palpable extravagance, fearing the tyranny of fantastic fashion; and so we join hands with the multitude who do

injury to our artists and to our art by their blind adulation. We stifle our intelligences and our better taste, and cry out in praise of "original readings" and against "the shackling slavery of mildewed tradition."

The hope for the future lies in discriminating criticism on the part of cultivated listeners; in the condemnation of false and meretricious standards; and in the just and hearty laudation of what is dignified, restrained and beautiful. If our pianists do not find virtue to be a sufficient reward for its own sake, they can only be rescued from the prevailing vices of libertinism in feeling and in technical display, and led back to a just appreciation of the finest classical models by the meritorious awards of that select section of the public by whom educative and just judgments are pronounced.

V.

Individuality and Eccentricity in Piano-Playing.

THE desire to appear original exercises a fatal fascination for many persons of moderate talent. Instead of being content to use well and to improve the individuality with which they have been endowed, they persuade themselves that the originality which they do not possess is to be acquired by an artificial straining after its outward superficial signs. They cultivate eccentricities in the hope that the public may accept the eccentricity as the hall mark of a striking individuality; and it not infrequently happens that these peculiarities, which were at first assumed as affectations, become second nature to those who assumed them, until finally, these seekers after originality attain a confident belief in their own genius.

The great men of the world have ever been above uch petty dissatisfaction and such foolish artifice. hey are content with their own individuality; they re content to have something worthy to say; they re content to say it in their own way, and as aturally as possible. And however laudable spiration and ambition may be, there is no virtue in gnoring the limitations of our capacity, or in striv- ng to acquire what is beyond the reach of our atural endowments.

It is not only in the domains of musical composi- ion that this striving after originality is proving urtful; it is equally active in the province of piano laying. And it is this evil that, in a large measure, ccounts for so much that is bizarre, far-fetched, hapsodical, in the performances of the extreme chools of romantic piano players of to-day. These ultra-romantic players evidently feel that an intelli- gent, lucid and traditional rendering of the music would not be likely to win for them any enthusiastic appreciation or applause; but they do not perceive that the true cause of this failure lies, not in the in- telligence, the lucidity, the traditional form of the rendering, but in the lack of anything really dis- tinguishing in their own personality, as well as in their lack of the power to enter deeply into sympathy with the music whose interpretation they undertake. And so they go on from extravagance to extrava-

gance, trusting by this means to rise to a position beyond their deserts.

Originality is not to be had for the striving; it is not to be had by desire; it is the native gift of its possessor. Charles Lamb was original; Beethoven was original; Liszt was original; but none of them acquired his originality by seeking after it. It was not an acquirement; it was not an affectation; it was the outcome of a remarkable personality. Any one of them would have scorned the notion of cultivating eccentricities in order to enhance his reputation with the public. They were amply content to be themselves, neither more nor less; and they knew well that by the intelligent expression of their personality they would duly come into their rightful kingdom.

This striving after the appearance of originality is the symptom of a deep-seated self-dissatisfaction among both composers and players. Our musical papers are full of the laments of disappointed composers and performers who will not be persuaded that the world, in the spheres of art, is not provincial, is not national, but is cosmopolitan, looking ever for what is the issue of a powerful imagination and work of a master artist. Those who suffer from disappointment are slow to believe that this cosmopolitan world seldom shows enthusiasm for what is mediocre, for what is the issue of a tame personality,

in serious art. It is pleased with what stirs it powerfully by its grandeur or its beauty; or it is pleased by what is light and charming. The musical world, in serious art, asks, and asks rightly, for strength of emotional temperament, for richness of musical imagination, for distinction in musical workmanship; and without these things it cares not how clever, how correct, how fulfilled with the riches of scholastic pedantry, a work may be. The cosmopolitan world of music asks for bread, and it will for ever refuse a stone in its place. It soon discovers that eccentricity does not necessarily imply genius.

In the province of piano playing, the notion that our great piano classics may be made the subject of extravagant and eccentric interpretations, is growing with the increasing desire of the mediocre mind for the acquisition of originality. And so, while, on the one hand, we are warned against the intelligent, lucid, obvious, traditional expositions of these works; on the other hand, we are treated to gross misinterpretations. We are provided often with eccentric distortions which we are expected to applaud under the title of "original readings." If we object to the treatment thus meted out to the music we revere, we are charged with being cold formalists, and we are told that nothing is so soul-killing as stereotyped repetitions, year after year, of traditional renderings.

Such a point of view is totally wrong. The path to true success is not affectation, is not an attempt to appear original; it is a deep and sympathetic understanding of our great classical compositions, a loving kinship with their spirit, a critical admiration for their masterly workmanship, and such ease in the technicalities of our art as will enable us to show by our interpretation that sympathy, that love, that understanding, that admiration. If our individuality is strong, if our personality is remarkable, then, with the qualifications already named, we shall find that we have no need for shallow artifice, no need for affectation, no need for originality in our readings. Our appreciative and discriminating renderings, however traditional they may be, will have such distinction that they will be accepted with joy; for what gains the laudation of those whose praise is best worth having is, the personal magnetism of the chaste and true artist. If we cannot gain this praise by following the path of true art, then we may rest assured that, spite of the momentary applause of the crowd tickled by a novelty, we shall never gain it by the affectation of originality or the assumption of eccentricities.

Such renderings of good music as I have often myself heard from players of considerable notoriety appear to me to be the result of an entire lack of any real appreciation of the music played. Secondary

melodies are pounded out as if to call the attention of the hearers to the fact that the player has discovered these melodies, and is therefore worthy to be applauded as the author of an "original reading." *Nuances* of all kinds are exaggerated in such a way as to show that the player has no power to appreciate the proportions of the composition he distorts. Traditional, or rather, sane and lucid renderings, are despised, because to one who does not enter deeply into the spirit of the music, who does not appreciate its form with the utmost nicety, a sane, intelligent exposition must seem rather flat. But that lucid, intelligent, traditional rendering, is the real test of the true worth of any interpretation. It shows, without any meretricious aids, without any superficial tricks, whether the performer has the root of the matter in him; whether he has an impressive personality; whether he has distinction enough to make his work acceptable for its artistic quality.

Far be it from me to advocate the repression of all individuality, or to be thought to desire that all players should give exactly the same interpretation of every note and every detail in each composition. Individuality, knowledge and appreciation, are sufficient guarantee of variety. There is not the slightest risk of stereotyped interpretations so long as the world is made up of diverse individuals. No two persons see the same landscape alike; no two

persons hear the same piece of music alike. Each person has his world to himself, and there is as little danger of the extinction of individuality as there is of the ultimate triumph of eccentricity. The exposition of the same composition by two great artists will always differ in small details, and the whole performance will be coloured by the individuality of each; but the true artist does all that in him lies to understand to the utmost, and to interpret with conscientious care, every composition in accordance with what seems to him to be the intention of the composer. He has no desire to pose as an original, no wish to gain the ear of the public by new readings or eccentric distortions. The differences between the interpretations of two great artists are the natural differences of their personalities, and the minute differences of individual view. But far otherwise are the differences among those who spurn tradition, whose aspirations are set upon originality. Eccentricities, extravagances, disproportionateness, egotism, blot their performances.

The real road to artistic distinction is, to understand to the utmost, to enter into full sympathy with, the intention of the composer as clearly expressed in his composition, and then to use all skill to make that intention clear in the performance. If the player possesses an individuality of any artistic value, it will appear strongly enough in his playing

to differentiate his work from that of any other player without any strife on his part after originality; but if he lacks that gift of distinction in his personality, then, no matter how he may try to free himself from the "shackles of mildewed tradition," no matter how wildly he may affect originality, his natural mediocrity, and his lack of true understanding, will ultimately be exposed, and his final end will be failure.

Our great masterpieces for the piano are the clearly and definitely expressed imaginations of mighty men who well knew what they wanted to say, and how to say it; and it is our humble privilege to study them with care and nicety, and to do our best in our interpretations to put self aside except in so far as it enables us to make the beauty of their imagination more evident to our hearers. A cultured individuality which appreciates with breadth and with nicety the clearly expressed intention of the composer, is what is desirable in the interpreter. That originality whose tendency is to launch out into the trackless waste of eccentricity, is what is to be justly condemned as false and meretricious in the art of piano playing.

VI.

Mendelssohn's True Rank in Art; a Centenary Review.

IT is exceedingly difficult to appraise rightly a living composer, or even one who has lived very near our own times. Augustine Birrell thinks that with an author it may be done occasionally "if one can give the slip to all the prejudices that came to him by way of inheritance, and all the prejudices he has picked up as he went along, and can manage to live just a little above the clouds and mists of his own generation." But how hard a task is this; few there are who have any chance of accomplishing it. But the farther removed from us in time is the life of the composer, the easier becomes the task of appraisement. It is made an easier task by the appraisement of the world. In the end the real judge, the final arbiter, is the corporate judgment of man-

kind. "The world is often wiser than any critic. There is someone wiser than Voltaire and wiser than Napoleon; *c'est tout le monde*."

It is now one hundred years since Mendelssohn was born. A long enough time has elapsed since his death to allow the many enthusiasms and prejudices which accompanied and followed his career to die down; to allow the atmosphere to become settled so that we can look upon his accomplishments in music more clearly. And the point of view in musical composition has altered so much during the last few decades that the music of Mendelssohn can now be judged as we judge the classics of bygone years, quite apart from all the distracting theories and tendencies of the present.

The chief incidents of his life are so well known that it is needless to recall them here. There are some of us who knew him as a friend; others have heard stories of him from our fathers who were witnesses of his triumphal career; most of us have read and re-read the records of his life, and have been, since our childhood, willing hearers of the quiet music which has insinuated its sweetness into so many cultivated homes. It is a more informing task to review the quality of his work as a composer, and to estimate his rank among musicians. The vicissitudes of men of genius as to the place accorded to them by successive generations of mankind

is remarkable. Bach, one of the mightiest of the mighty, was little known and little honoured in his own day; but his fame has been growing greater ever since. Mozart won his throne among the immortals before his short life on earth was finished. The greatest of the children of men come to their own at last, and their sun never sets; but those who are not of the very first rank may be often recognised by the rise and fall of their fortunes. Macaulay made a great name in his day; but thirty years after his death it was fashionable to look upon him as a rather superficial critic and historian with a reputation beyond his desert. So also has it been in the case of Dickens and George Eliot; and so has it been in the case of Mendelssohn. The penalty the world seems to exact for exaggerated estimates of artists during their lives is a corresponding depreciation in the estimate of the succeeding generation; but generally, after the turmoil has subsided, true judgment is made. Englishmen were carried away to excesses of enthusiasm by the strength of personal and local bias for Mendelssohn. His personal attractions were manifold; the ardour and beauty of his work amongst us, whether as a composer, a pianist, or a conductor, excited our unbounded admiration. And so great was the enthusiasm aroused throughout the nation that for a time the glory of the great "sleeping kings" of music

was not a little overshadowed. Besides, it must be remembered that we were not an exceedingly musical people. However glorious was our name in poetry or in painting, the genius of the nation did not lie in music. Therefore as a people our enthusiasm for the man Mendelssohn took the place of real knowledge of the art of music, and we did him the wrong of exalting him above his legitimate rank.

A competent critical judgment is rare. It is almost impossible to judge art discerningly unless one's mind is deeply imbued with the spirit of the noblest art. The critic must be familiar with those great models which "*sana mens omnium hominum attestatur.*" This is the method of training commended as essential by Addison, Goethe, Hume and Matthew Arnold. The mind of the critic must be so permeated by the taste of what is greatest that without the necessity for hearing or seeing afresh he can immediately compare any work offered for his criticism with those attested models of beauty. At the time of Mendelssohn's career in England the English were not a people so informed in music as to be capable of making true critical estimates presupposing such a training as has been considered essential by the greatest critics. And if we turn to the people in whose very atmosphere such a training existed, what shall we find to be their judgment of Mendelssohn? Mendelssohn was a German him-

self. He therefore belonged to that nation whose genius did lie in music. He belonged to the land of the immortals among musicians—to the land of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. What then was the German estimate of Mendelssohn? Their whole genius was in sympathy with, their whole being was permeated by, the spirit of those monarchs in the realms of music; and therefore theirs is the estimate most likely to be the truest. This nation loved, praised and honoured Mendelssohn; but they never placed him in the highest rank among the kings of music.

We can best judge Mendelssohn by a consideration of his whole character as a man and as a musician; and then by a consideration of his works. For it is true that every expressed feeling, thought and action of a man, tells the critical observer something by means of which he can measure the stature of that man. In proportion as we know these expressions of a man's life, in so far we know the man. If ever a public man was well known, Mendelssohn was well known in England. And from all that we learn of him, it is fairly easy to state the class to which he rightly belongs. He had a refined nature, artistic tastes, studious habits, a contemplative disposition and a quick intellect. He was widely cultured and deeply religious; his heart was a happy one, and his spirits were unfailingly good.

In many points he resembled our poet Wordsworth. Both were men of "cheerful yesterdays and confident to-morrows"; both possessed high seriousness and a deeply meditative nature; both loved the country, and in its charms found many a source of inspiration; both were philosophic and religious, serene and happy-hearted. The aspirations of both were set upon beauty, and neither of them failed to strive after perfection of form in his work. We learn further that Mendelssohn, though he did not come, as some great musicians, of a musical ancestry, nevertheless owed many varied talents to a very cultured heredity. His grandfather was known in Europe as "the modern Plato," and his mother was a woman whose society was, for her remarkable abilities, courted by men of talent. The result was happy. Mendelssohn was not, as many great men have been, one-sided. He had many interests and pursuits; he was an excellent linguist, painter and letter writer. Everything he did he did well. His motto always was: "*Res severa est verum gaudium.*" He therefore took the utmost pains to ensure that his work should be in just proportion and nice in all its details. "In his music, as in all that he did, his aim ever was to make everything as clear and finished as possible by so many modifications as might be necessary to perfect his original idea; and in this he contrasted severely with Schumann, who

thought that what was put down at first was most likely to represent the true expression of the mind." Mendelssohn was on the right side in this matter, and he could quote the excellent authority of Horace:

> "*carmen reprehendite, quod non*
> *Multa dies et multa litura coercuit, atque*
> *Praesectum decies non castigavit ad unguem.*"

Notwithstanding Mendelssohn's versatility, music was his favourite study, and by it he became famous. From an early age he wrote music, he played musical instruments and he conducted musical performances. Berlioz calls him "*un producteur indefatigable.*" His fertility in musical composition, and his industry in all branches of musical art, were very remarkable. He practised the piano until his performances were so finished and beautiful as to gain the rapturous applause of all the best musicians of his day; he studied the organ until he played so magnificently, that, as was also said of Handel, and as I have seen with Sir Robert Stewart, he could not play his hearers out of church; he conducted so well that his chorus and band executed their work as it were with one heart and voice, and *that* the heart and voice of Mendelssohn. Steady work, careful work and hard work, were through life his chosen part, as they have ever been the chosen part of all

hose who have risen to eminence in any branch of rt. Finally, in addition to his other varied dis-inctions as a man of talent and a musician, Men-delssohn possessed a charm of conversation and manner which made his society welcomed by the ultivated people of England and Europe.

From this hasty glance at the habits, the methods, he talents, the accomplishments, the spirit, of Men-delssohn, it is quite possible to form a fair general stimate of the man; and to determine the class to vhich he belongs. His character in its broad out-ines is before us; and all its constituent parts ap-pear to be of a decidedly noble and cultivated kind; ut we fail to notice any of those majestic traits, hose mighty passions, which distinguish from among men of talent the great seers of earth. And vhen we fully comprehend the fact, so often lost ight of, that no creation of a man can be greater han the man himself; when we fully realise the act that especially in music, the character, the men-al and spiritual qualities of the man, are exposed, hat his music is neither more nor less than the ex-pression in a beautiful form of the ever-changing countenance of the heart of its creator, we shall not ind it a difficult task to analyse the characteristics f Mendelssohn's music or to adjudge to it its right-ul rank.

His music is, at its best, the reflection of his own

mobile heart in its finest moods. Therefore it possesses high seriousness, deep religious feeling, perfect grace of form, a kindly, cultured spirit and an easy melodious flow. He was not a pioneer or a revolutionary; he was not the founder of a new school; he was not one of the musicians of the future. He loved the old order; he was of a peaceable and quiet nature; there was none of the rugged grandeur or the passionate fire about him which one expects in the apostles of a new faith. So he composed almost entirely in the musical forms already established. Many of his lovely lyrics, full of simple grace and beauty, are, and shall ever be, familiar to all cultivated Englishmen. What did he not write? We have those two richly-orchestrated and finely-finished symphonies, for ever favourites, his Op. 56, called the Scotch Symphony; and his Op. 90, called the Italian Symphony. The first conceived after a twilight visit to Holyrood Palace; the second, conceived under the sunny skies of Italy, reflects his bright spirits so well that he tells us it is to be "the gayest thing I have yet done." We have his lovely overtures, the "Hebrides," his most perfect work; and the "Midsummer Night's Dream," of which Schumann says that it is his first and highest flight. We have "the best violin concerto and the best piano trio since Beethoven; the best organ music since Bach; and the most popular and

effective oratorios since Handel." It is a great record for any man.

The modern revolutionaries who think fit to sneer at his achievements; who go heart and soul with Wagner, Schumann, Strauss, Debussy and all the most advanced of these advanced days, may well lay it to heart that the work of Mendelssohn was beautiful. And it is beautiful in good company, for is not beauty one of the distinguishing characteristics of all the art of the world that has lived and been loved? Mendelssohn had in his music much also that was novel in effect, much that was romantic; but he was always sane, always melodious, always beautiful in his workmanship. The question at issue among musicians is well worth much fresh consideration. Which is the more likely to win immortality, what is highly emotional, startlingly novel, while crude in form, unmelodious in character and often positively ugly in its harmonic progressions; or, on the other hand, what is distinguished for its grace, spontaneity, freshness, happy expression, clear form, delicate orchestration, melodious character and general beauty? If the former of these is the right ideal for the composer, then the ultra-modern school may dream comfortably of future fame; but if the latter is the right ideal, then, in spite of all sneers, Mendelssohn will for ever have

a place in the esteem of the world as a winsome artist.

With one of our modern crazes he had no sympathy. He set his face against programmes. He gathered inspiration from "the serenity of nature," so he tells us; and fresh conceptions came into his mind under the influences of varied great scenes in different parts of the world; but for all this he wrote what is generally known as absolute music. Even the romantic and Wagnerian Dannreuther admits this fact and emphasises it. In the sixth volume of the "Oxford History" he tells us that "Mendelssohn held that any attempt to reduce definite combinations of tone and rhythm—that is to say, musical expression generally—to verbal expression, or *vice versâ*, must result in failure."

Many a man in the world of art has done beautiful work, graceful work, winsome work, work which must live and delight, but yet falls short of the supreme gift of the great ones of earth. To judge of the rank of a man, we must test his greatest works by the measure of similar works to which the world has with one consent accorded the highest place. Not by his minor productions, but by the supreme efforts of his genius, must the creator of art be judged in order to award him his just rank. We must set side by side Mendelssohn's symphonies with the finest of those of Beethoven and the finest of those of Mozart;

we must set his oratorios, which were the greatest work of his mature genius, which were his fittest medium for the expression of his deep religious feelings, beside the finest oratorios and masses of Handel, Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. It is by such a juxtaposition of their works that we can estimate the size of the men. And what account does Mendelssohn give of himself when we compare his best with the best of these men? Does he, as Handel, thrill us to our heart of hearts and exalt us beyond this earthly sphere by the majesty of his imagination? Do we feel the tremendous agonising passion, the matchless sublimity, the divine melody, which move us as we listen to the choral music of Bach? In Bach's "Passion" Music, however refined we may be, however imaginative, however religious, we feel that heights of imagination have been scaled, that depths of human emotion have been sounded, which are far beyond our thought. To such music we listen in silent rapture as to revelations of the human spirit beyond our dreams, and while listening we experience the exaltation of a religious service. But are we thus spell-bound by the thoughts and emotions expressed by Mendelssohn? Surely not! We are never enraptured, never spell-bound, never stirred to the uttermost depths of our hearts. We are touched by communion with the personality of one who is beautiful

of heart, entirely refined, and fulfilled with confidence and peace. Which of us after listening to those noble songs, "If with all your Hearts," "Oh, Rest in the Lord," "But the Lord is Mindful of His Own," "Then Shall the Righteous Shine," does not feel that he hears a message of peace from one who found by seeking, from one who had his heart's desire by patient waiting, from one who realised the mindfulness of heaven for the children of earth, from one who foresaw the "everlasting joy" which shall be upon the heads of the righteous?

If any influence could have aroused Mendelssohn to a fervour of eloquence such as is common to all of earth's greatest artists, it would have been the literature of those sacred books into the spirit of whose pages his heart entered so earnestly. The fact that this literature never so elevated him is proof enough that even had he lived to old age instead of dying young, he would still have been unequal to the creation of such angelic melody as Mozart, such Miltonic majesty as Handel, such supreme agony as Bach, such giant passion as Beethoven. Two things were lacking in him—original strength of genius; and the strength which is born of victory over sorrow. The lines fell to him in pleasant places. Schubert tells us that his music is the product of his genius and his misery; and that what he wrote in his greatest misery the world

loves best. "Perfected through suffering." To sound the depths of human sorrow; to be acquainted with grief; that would seem to be the road through which humanity must pass before it reaches the gate that is called Beautiful. Across the divinest melodies and the richest harmonies ever created by immortal poets, painters or musicians, may be traced the shadow of a great strife, the strife of earthly influences battling against heavenly aspirations, even though the end of the strife be victory.

Upon examining the oratorio of "Elijah" we find that there is in it much to praise. It is finely dramatic; it possesses unity of aim and character. Dannreuther puts the point well when he says that: "It is evident that every conspicuous feature in the method and technique makes for characterisation. The dramatic force of the scenes, their conciseness and vivid colouring, the pointed rhythms of the choruses, the highly-wrought orchestration, the energy expressed in the choruses of Baal's priests, the fierce savagery of 'Woe to Him, He Shall Perish,' all point in the same direction." There are splendid choruses, there are fine melodies, but they come upon the hearer of the whole as oases. The complete work, unified as is its dramatic character, has one fatal defect, it is wearisome. It lacks the freshness of fervent, sustained inspiration; it lacks spontaneity and inevitableness. It sounds as if the

composer had set himself to a task, and that he had resolutely persevered until that task was completed. The fact that the English people have a custom of hearing this work performed at their great festivals yearly is no argument against the truth of the criticisms here urged. The English people are strongly conservative; they began this custom of performing the "Elijah" when the enthusiasm aroused by the composer's presence in England was at its height; they are not a spontaneously musical people, and they have that thoughtful seriousness about them which enables them to take this duty calmly. What John Stuart Mill in his autobiography says about the poetry of Wordsworth, may very fitly be applied to the English people and Mendelssohn. "Compared with the greatest poets, he may be said to be the poet of unpoetical natures, possessed of quiet and contemplative tastes. He exactly suited my condition, for unpoetical natures are precisely those which require cultivation." So, as John Stuart Mill loved the long "Excursion," the English people love their long "Elijah." But with this difference, Mill knew that Wordsworth was not of supreme rank as a poet's poet; the people of England have not been so discriminating as to the rank of the composer of "Elijah."

The supreme art of the world grips; the supreme music of the world grips the musician, and it holds

him. Even if the story is long there is no wearying. It always possesses freshness, spontaneity, unflagging inspiration, inevitableness, strength, beauty. And because it contains these elements of greatness, "we cannot choose but hear."

When I listen to a performance of the "Elijah," the damping influences of what is second-rate in art fall over me. Do what I will my attention wanders; do what I will, bodily discomforts begin to magnify themselves; the apparent effort in the music wearies; and even if my attention is occasionally absorbed by fragmentary portions of the work, I feel myself unconsciously agreeing with the preacher when he said that "much study is a weariness to the flesh." Entirely different is the effect produced upon me when I hear the great music of the world. Bodily appurtenances seem to evanesce; my attention is, without any conscious effort on my part, enchained; the spiritual power and beauty of the music seem to increase and swallow up everything else till I am conscious of nothing beyond the sense of rapture and the flow of inimitable sound.

There is a story told that once when a pupil at Leipzig made a rather abrupt modulation cumbersomely, Mendelssohn remarked: "I call that modulation ungentlemanlike." The story is characteristic. Mendelssohn was decidedly the cultured gentleman. About him and his music we find all

those qualities which we attribute to the polished gentleman: but rugged grandeur; no! Inevitableness, such as De Quincey attributes to the works of Shakespeare: "Like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers; like forest and snow, rain and dew, hailstorm and thunder"; no! The strength which could lead a man through the Inferno, as it led Dante, and teach him after it all to say, "*In la tua volontade e nostro pace*"; again, no! Yet still, if he is not of the very first rank, he is at the top of the second. He is a consummate artist at his best. He is beautiful at his best. Many of his compositions have the virtues of spontaneous melody, "of pure beauty of sound, of perfection in workmanship as far as they go; and artistic perfection of style and form will always tell in the long run in music as well as in poetry."

Mendelssohn is worthy to share in the panegyric made upon Wordsworth by his friend, James Cambell Shairp: "He brings the harsh domain of the actual into closer vicinity to the sunny land of the ideal; he rouses our sympathy with what elevates and ennobles our being; he has brightened our lives with many images of beauty and grace; and for these good gifts we owe him love and reverence."

VII.

Music in London Two Hundred and Fifty Years Ago.

The Author Assisted by Samuel Pepys, Esq., Secretary of His Majesty's Navy.

IN this odd world there are always with us two classes of people who hold views diametrically opposed upon what seems a simple enough subject – the progress or retrogression of the race. The young and middle-aged generally are optimistic enough to think that upon the whole we are making progress—progress in all directions. Many of the old take the pessimistic view, and lament the fact that things are not what they used to be when they were young. For the young optimists the world goes on; for the old pessimists the world goes back. It is not at all an easy matter for the fresh generations

of mankind to remember or realise that there is a strong family likeness throughout the whole human race, and that what seem to be fresh sensations are much like the same sensations which have been felt at some previous era. At the very dawn of civilisation we learn, from one of the oldest books in the world, that at a time probably preceding the building of the pyramids, men were tiring of the "degenerate epoch" in which they lived, and were looking back to the good old times now gone. So there was nothing very new in the lament of Sir Edward Elgar about the degeneracy of music in London. He shows his family likeness to the whole race of man, of whom one part at all times and periods of history sing the same sad song. Tom Killigrew, two hundred and fifty years ago, makes the same complaint to our old friend, Samuel Pepys: "He tells me that he hath gone several times, eight or ten times, hence to Rome to hear good music. . . . That he hath ever endeavoured in the late King's time and in this, to introduce good music, but he never could do it, there having been never any music here better than ballads." If anything could make our pessimists take heart of grace; if anything could bring vividly before their imaginations the marvellous progress of music in the great world of London, it would be a little journey back two hundred and fifty years to that self-same city, there to

ee and to hear what can be seen and heard in the arrulous pages of Pepys. Degeneracy! It is the ream of dotage.

Pepys, that vain, naïve, ever fresh, music-loving hatterer, tells us much that is amusing and suggesive. He wrote in the days before the birth of Bach, Handel or any of our great moderns; but not so ong ago as to prevent our astonishment at the marellous progress made in the youngest of the arts rom then till now.

And we can safely assume that Pepys put the best face he could on musical matters; for he lived n London; he knew everyone; and he loved music. As he says himself in his quaint way: "Musick is he thing of the world that I love most; and all the pleasure almost that I now can take. . . . That which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind-musick when the angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me, and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife; that neither then, nor all the evening going home, and at home, I was able to think of anything, but remained all night transported, so as I could not believe that ever any musick hath that real command over the soul of a man as this did upon me; and makes me resolve to practise wind-musick, and to make my wife do the like." I think

we may count upon hearing the very best that is to be heard, from one so charmingly fresh to new sensations, and so sweetly devoted to music.

ON FOREIGN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN LONDON TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO.

When has patriotic John Bull not cried out against foreign music and foreign musicians? His complaints are as fresh to-day as they were in the days of Pepys. He wants to have his local wares appreciated no matter what be their kind; they are, at all events, good English stuff, and that ought to be enough for any good Englishman. It is a wonder that he never lays really to heart the fact that art is world-wide; that it belongs to no one nation, nor people, nor tongue; and that when it is of the best type it does not need to have its merits trumpeted abroad or thrust down the throats of men; for the whole world seeks it out and admires it for ever. Poor Pepys is torn asunder by the conflict of his duty as a true John Bull to give the preference to what is English; and his cosmopolitan taste which urges his love for the best in art, from whatever country it may come. At one time he says: "I to the Queen's Chapel, and there did hear the Italians

sing; and indeed their musick did appear most admirable to me, beyond anything of ours." And again: "They spent the whole evening in singing the best piece of music counted of all hands in the world, made by Signor Charissimi, the famous master in Rome." But then tit-for-tat: "To Whitehall; and here in the Boarded Gallery did hear the music with which the King is presented this night by Monsieur Grebus, the master of his musick; both instrumentall —I think twenty-four violins—and vocall. But, God forgive me! I never was so little pleased with a concert of musick in my life. The manner of setting the words, and repeating them out of order, and that with a number of voices, makes me sick." This Frenchman, it appears, had been preferred by the King to Purcell, and when his musick was pronounced a failure, great was the triumph of John Bull. But what a mercy for John Bull, spite of the many envious pains he has suffered from time to time, that foreign music and foreign musicians have ever had free ingress to his hospitable shores. If there had never been "free trade in brains" in our home-land; if from the time of Pepys till now we had resisted all the inroads of foreign music and musicians, what would the music of England be to-day? Rest assured the publics of the world always want the best they can get; and they will get the best, regardless of its birthplace. The right way to that public

patronage is to provide the best, and then fear no competition.

Pepys is always playing Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with himself on the subject of music. He is sturdy John Bull one day; and a lover of the music of the world the next. Again and again he expresses his preference for the English musick such as it was: "We heard Mrs. Manuel sing with one of the Italians who was there; and indeed she sings mightily well, and just after the Italian manner, but yet do not please me like one of Mrs. Knipp's songs, to a good English tune, the manner of their ayre not pleasing me so well as the fashion of our own, nor so natural; . . . . and not understanding the words of the Italain, I lose the benefit of the vocalitys of the musick, and it proves only instrumental." (How primitive in our tastes we were in those ancient days of musick. "It proves *only* instrumental.")

VOCAL MUSIC IN LONDON TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO.

All the music to be had in those days was of the crudest kind; perhaps some of the ballads were about the best of the music performed, and singing songs appears to have been a great pastime with all

classes of the people, night and day. It was a matter of much anxiety to Pepys to have his wife well taught, not that he was at all disposed to spend too much money upon her pleasure, but his vanity in wishing her to appear as a fine lady led him to do what he could to enable her to gain this useful accomplishment of singing. His efforts in this direction shed some amusing light on the state of the teaching profession at that time. "At noon home, and there find Mr. Goodgroome, whose teaching of my wife only by singing over and over again to her, and letting her sing with him, not by herself, to correct her faults, I do not like at all, but was angry at it. I did soundly rattle him for neglecting her so much as he has done, she not having learnt three songs these three months, and more." How different from the studio of the singing teacher of any note to-day. Here we have libraries of books filled with opposing theories upon all branches of voice production and singing. Here we have diagrams of all the anatomy bearing upon the question of the voice; here we have the most highly elaborated systems of teaching singing, each of which is utterly condemned by some learned practitioner; but have we improved a very great deal in the art of turning out good singers? We should be soundly rattled for so much controversy and so little result.

Poor Mr. Goodgroome! How many of us, these days, would put up with being "soundly rattled" by our employers, I wonder, for not teaching as many songs as they thought proper? Unfortunately, the rattling, even then, did no good, and so poor Pepys had to resort to driving a contract bargain with this forbearing singing master to his wife. He agrees to pay so much for "piecework": "This day, being dissatisfied with my wife's learning so few songs of Goodgroome, I did come to a new bargain with him, to teach her songs at so much, viz., ten shillings a song, which he accepts of, and will teach her." Apparently it was all no good. His wife never turned out a brilliant singer, whether from her own fault or that of Mr. Goodgroome, the history does not relate. It is partly her fault for: "Poor wretch! her ear is so bad that it made me angry, till the poor wretch cried to see me so vexed"! But for all this, Pepys manages to extract some satisfaction for himself by pitting her against other singers who he knew were palpably worse than she. "But, Lord, how I did please myself to make Betty Turner sing, to see what a beast she is as to singing, not knowing how to sing one note in tune, worse than my wife a thousand times, so that it do a little reconcile me to her."

On every available occasion Pepys took to his

ecreation, hearing music. And so in the course of nis diary we learn something of the kinds of vocal music which were to be heard in the London of his day. At one time it was "a brave variety of Italain and Spanish songs and a canon for eight voices, which Mr. Lock madē lately on these words,—Domine salvum fac Regem"; at another time, "dined at a club, where we had three voices to sing catches"; and again, "at home, practising to sing, which is now my great trade." Whatever doubts he had about his wife, he had none about himself; and about his singing he flatters himself very complacently that he is doing great things. "Myself humming to myself (which now-a-days is my constant practice since I begun to learn to sing) the *trillo*, and found that by use it do come upon me." His judgment is not altogether unbiassed, so that we cannot quite accept as gospel truth all he says about singers and their singing. He has a keen eye for a pretty woman, and so he tells us: "Here the best company for musique I ever was in, in my life, and wish I could live and die in it, both for musique and the face of Mrs. Pierce, and Knipp, who is pretty enough and sings the noblest that ever I heard in my life."

MR. PEPYS ON MUSICAL COMPOSITION.

Poor gentleman, he took himself quite seriously in everything. His work at composition is as important as his singing. And so we are treated with this narration: "Home to practise my composition of music. At night begun to compose songs, and began with 'Gaze Not on Swans.'" Another quaint entry reads: "(Lord's Day), up, and while I staid for the barber, tried to compose a duo of counter point; and I think it will do very well, it being by Mr. Berkenshaw's rule." He was as proud as Punch upon hearing his song sung, and is never tired of telling how that "they praised it mightily." "Captain Downing, who loves and understands music" (of course he does) "would by all means have my song, 'Beauty Retire,' and he extolls it above anything he ever heard"; "a very fine song it seems to be." Was there ever a greater innocent in this naughty world?

Not alone did his compositions please him, but he had an idea that the musicians of his time did not understand the art of composition or the science of music very well, and that he was not above enlighten-

ng them. So, he tells us, "All the evening pricking lown some things, and trying some conclusions on ny viall, in order to the inventing a better theory of nusick than hath been yet abroad; and I think erily I shall do it." If one may judge him by the tter simplicity of his reflections throughout the whole diary, he would be hard put about to invent better theory of cookery, to which he had a great nind, or indeed, to put together any sensible theory f anything, so superficial, so inordinately vain was ie. But we can guess what might have been the alue of his new theories of musical composition rom the impression left on his mind as to the genius f Mr. Hooke. "He did make me understand the nature of musical sounds made by strings very rettily; and told me that having come to a certain number of vibrations proper to make any tone, he is ble to tell how many strokes a fly makes with her vings, those flies that hum in thier flying, by the note that answers to it in music, during their flying." Very pretty, indeed; but quite characteristic of a happy-go-lucky way of jotting down at random and n a disjointed manner anything he was told; and quite unlike the thought of a man who worked teadily and systematically so as, by his work, to nlighten the world.

Where now are all the songs of Pepys; where are his theories of composition which were to set musicians right? As Swift says, in his "Epistle to Posterity," "I enquired after them, but I enquired in vain; the memorial of them was lost among men, their place was no more to be found."

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN LONDON TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO.

Orchestras did not flourish in those days. London now, even though she be as Sir Edward Elgar says, one hundred and fifty years behind the times, can show not a little improvement. The quality and variety of the musical instruments then available would probably surprise the ears of our present backward Londoners. First of all we are introduced to the *cittern*, on which Pepys and his friends used to entertain themselves whilst at the barber's waiting to be shaved. The cittern was really a guitar strung with wire instead of gut, and it was part of the furnishing of a barber's shop in those times. The person waiting to be shaved played on the "ghittern" till his turn arrived. Whether it be cause for regret, I think we are sometimes behind the times in the matter of musical barbers; for I know I have never had the chance to divert myself

"making barber's music" while waiting to be shaved. All the instruments available were food for Pepys's fancy. He had only to hear one, and he must needs get it, and make his poor wife a slave to it as well. Perhaps his viallin was his chief instrument; but he had, in addition, a lute, a flageolette, a tryangle, a virginall and probably a harpsichord. Not one amongst the whole lot, except the viallin, that a decent musician could put up with in these degenerate days! But our friend was quite proud of his instrumental accomplishments, and many times used to rejoice his heart playing to his unfortunate friends. He resembles the old rogue, Benvenuto Cellini, who also never tired of sounding his own praises, while at the same time he delighted in freely censuring "the odious vices of his neighbours." "At night to my viallin, and afterwards to my lute, and I took much pleasure to have the neighbours come forth into the yard to hear me." And then: "I went to hear Mrs. Turner's daughter play upon the harpsichon; but Lord! it was enough to make any man sick to hear her; yet was I forced to commend her highly." "Mr. Temple's wife, after dinner, fell to play on the harpsichon, till she so tired everybody that I left the house without taking leave, and no creature left standing by to hear her." Scotchmen must hold Mr. Pepys in abhorrence, for the one thing he could not stand was the music of the bag-

pipes. "Lord Brouncker did call for his bagpipes, which, with pipes of ebony, tipt with silver, he did play beyond anything of that kind that ever I heard in my life; and with great pains he must have obtained it, but with pains that the instrument do not deserve at all; for, at the best, it is mighty barbarous music."

But if these were the solo instruments of that day, what must the orchestras have been? To use his own expressive phrase, "They were enough to make any man sick." The great orchestral feat of his acquaintance was the playing of the twenty-four viallins, where "among the fiddlers (at Covent Garden) I first saw a dulcimere played on with sticks knocking of the strings, and is very pretty." If only Sir Edward Elgar had been privileged to hear this tit-bit perhaps he would have modified the severity of his judgment in view of the advance made by our Londoners since.

Then there was the music of a great occasion. All England was wrought up to see and hear the most astonishing ceremony, with the utmost "pomp and circumstance," at Westminster Hall; for the King was to be crowned. "I took a great deal of pleasure to go up and down, and look upon the ladies, and to hear the musique of all sorts, but above all, the twenty-four viallins." The hearing of the "twenty-

four viallins" was the time of his life. What would Richter or Nikisch or Henry J. Wood say to it now? There was also the band at Whitehall; but to the credit of Pepys be it recorded, he preferred the beautiful orchestral effect of the twenty-four viallins. "To Whitehall; where I staid to hear the trumpets and the kettledrums, and then the other drums, which are much cried up, though I think it dull, vulgar music."

HOW THINGS WERE DONE AT THE THEATRE.

"The boy that was to sing a song, not singing it right, his master fell about his eares and beat him, so that it put the whole house into an uproar." Every now and then Pepys personates John Bull. Take, for example, his noble panegyric upon the London theatre of two hundred and fifty years ago: "The stage is now a thousand times more glorious than ever heretofore. Now, wax candles, and many of them; then, not above three pounds of tallow; now, all things civil, no rudeness anywhere; then, as in a bear garden; then, two or three fiddlers; now, nine or ten of the best; then, nothing but rushes on the ground, and everything else mean; now, all otherwise." There is a patriot for you; nothing

niggardly in his praise. But what an extraordinary jump from the miserable splendour of that primitive day to the glories, the comforts, the conveniences of our modern theatres! "Wax candles; rushes; nine or ten fiddlers"! Electric light; axminster carpets; a full orchestra. It is a bigger jump than that from the three pounds of tallow. What will it all come to in another two hundred and fifty years?

CHURCH AND ORGAN MUSIC OF TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO.

Nothing appears to have been a greater recreation to Pepys than to go to church of a Sunday to look at the pretty women there, and hear what music was going. The behaviour in those days was anything but edifying. If the music went wrong the people burst out laughing; and if the parson gave them a dull sermon they made no bones about going off to sleep as fast as they could. And in other intervals of the service not a little highly improper love-making engaged the attention of many of those present. It was about the time when organs and surpliced choirs and anthems, were rather a novelty; and it was evidently thought quite the thing to come

out of curiosity or conventionality, and to criticise freely. "That which I chiefly went to see was the young ladies of the school, whereof there is a great store, very pretty; and also the organ, which is handsome, and tunes the psalms and plays with the people, and makes me mighty earnest to have a pair at our church." Pepys has no reticence upon the subject of his church going. Pretty girls, and the music, were his prime diversions there; and as he was always anxious to do what was proper for a man of fashion, the following note in his diary will give an idea of the fashion of those times: "In St. Dunstan's church I stood by a pretty, modest maid, whom I did labour to take by the hand; but she would not, but got further and further from me; and at last I could perceive her to take pins out of her pocket to prick me if I should touch her again; which seeing, I did forbear, and was glad I did spy her design. And then I fell to gaze upon another pretty maid, in a pew close to me, and she on me; and I did go about to take her by the hand, which she suffered a little, and then withdrew." Edifying churchmanship, truly! And was there ever in the world such a conceited, garrulous coxcomb as old Pepys? He doesn't care what he tells you about himself, or what silly things he does. And yet, for all the silliness of the man, for all his garrulous chit-chat, he has so made his personality felt in his

writing that he still lives as fresh as ever, although ten thousand men of far more worth and far more sense are long forgotten.

At Whitehall Chapel, he heard Captain Cooke's music, "This is the first day of having the vialls and other instruments to play a symphony between every verse of the anthems." In 1659 he went to the Abbey, "and walked there, seeing the great confusion of people that come there to hear the organs." What the King did and what he thought, were matters of much concern with Pepys, and so he tells how that he sat in his pew one Sunday and sang before the King, "and did it mighty well"; how, at another time, in Whitehall Chapel, the anthem was ill sung, "which made the King laugh"; again, how that "I perceived that the King is a little musicall, and kept good time all along the anthem." And he even gives us an account of one of the early examples of programme music in church: "A brave anthem upon the 150 Psalm, where upon the word *trumpet* very good music is made."

Surely enough has been now told to make us look with astonishment and pride at the advance of music in London during the two hundred and fifty years which has gone by since Pepys painted his primitive picture! If we are now behind the times, as "the times" appears to the glorious imagination of Sir

Edward Elgar, we may surely hope greatly for the future of music. For if to him the music of to-day in London seems already antiquated by one hundred and fifty years, how inconceivably splendid it will be when, in his opinion, it sweeps majestically up-to-date, and passes onwards to the years to come.

VIII.

A Harpsichord Tutor of about 1750.

IT is a curious fact that one becomes so entirely accustomed to the environment of modern civilisation with all its manifold appurtenances, as to find it difficult to realise vividly that there was a time, and not so very long ago, when most of it all was utterly non-existent and quite beyond the range even of prophetic dreamland. In music, for example, we are so familiar with the piano and its literature, with the works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin; with elaborate schools and systems of education; with abundant treatises on all branches of music, theoretical and practical; that the time when these things did not exist seems but a shadowy period of the past, a period to be noticed casually in ancient history, but not to be vividly realised as the living present of a recent past. Some

Such reflections as these started in my mind when I looked over an old harpsichord tutor entitled: "The Art of Playing the Harpsichord, by John Casper Heck. London Printed by Welcker and Sold at his Musick Shop in Gerrard Street, St. Anne's, Soho, and at the Author's at No. 2 in Warwick Court Holborn." Two impressions were vividly communicated to my mind on reading this quaint old book, first, that I was thrown right into the life of the days of a hundred and fifty years ago; and secondly, that I was appalled at the poverty, the vacuity, of the music of the time, I felt, as it were, a contemporary of Pepys, so proud of his little performances on the harpsichord, and so vicious in his criticisms of his neighbours: "I went to hear Mrs. Turner's daughter play on the harpsichord; but Lord! it was enough to make any man sick to hear her." "Mr. Temple's wife, after dinner fell to play on the harpsichord, till she so tired everybody, that I left the house without taking leave and no creature was left standing by to hear her." When I looked over the "Collection of Lessons selected from some of the most eminent classic Authors," and found my range confined to twenty-four pieces in contrapuntal style, most of them deadly monotonous, without melody of any interest, without emotional content, without any of the beauty of music as we now know it, I was quite ready to sympathise with him who ex-

claimed, "It was enough to make any man sick to hear it." Uncouth in form and unrestrained in emotion, as much of modern music is in its tendency, one would rather be condemned to its tender mercies than to the sterility of those old "classic lessons." But even there in those old barren times a chord of enthusiasm is awakened upon reading that: "Fugues, a particular stile of Composition, are according to their Nature more generally calculated for the Organ than the Harpsichord, yet there are some that may be conveniently performed on the latter, such as that *compos'd by the celebrated Mr. J. S. Bach*, and the Overture by his Pupil Lu. Krebs." Music had made a beginning, even though there was famine in the land, even though no seer could foretell the riches that were soon to come. The Fugue quoted was a little one in C major, in three parts, printed as number XVI of the seventh book of Bach's Clavier Works in the Steingraber edition. And when we see poor Lu. Krebs's Overture in G minor awarded a place of honour in this old book, we are reminded of the letter of Bach to this favourite pupil of his: "The bearer of this, Herr Johann Ludwig Krebs, has asked me to assist him with a testimonial as to his performance. I am persuaded that I have brought him to be a musician who has distinguished himself among us, in so far that he is skilled on the clavier, violin and lute, so

hat he need not be ashamed to be heard. I there-
ore wish him God's help to gain him advancement,
nd give him, to this end, my best recommendation."
it was advancement to have his composition stand
de by side with Bach's in this quaint tutor, then
ie testimonial must have soon brought forth fruit.

We all learn our lesson in our school music books
bout equal temperament; but it is for most of us
ho are not piano makers or tuners, simply a school
sson which has no practical interest. But how
ividly the manner of the olden time is thrust upon
s when we read: "Lastly, it is to be recommended
) have the Instrument well tuned according to the
ew System of equal Temperment, where all Keys
ithout exception are made uniform and equally
ell in Tune, a material and indispensable point in
ie modern System of Musick." A long and quaint
xposition of this "Modern System" is then given
ith ample "Rules for Tuneing," and we are in-
ormed that "According to this Method we shall
nd it equally agreeable whether we play for In-
ance in the open Key of C. or in the Key of C.
at and the Imperfection generally complain'd of,
ill by means of this proportionable and equal
emperment be in a manner intirely removed to
ie satisfaction of the Judicious."

And then when one reads over the instructions in
is tutor, so primitive, so barren, so devoid of any

of the manifold merits of the instructive schools of to-day, it is not easy to avoid a sigh of thankfulness that one's incarnation has been postponed to so much more fruitful a time and generation. The beginners of those days must have had a rather unhappy time of it if all their teachers had the same muddle-headed way of explaining their difficulties to them as our author. After telling that "Each Octave contains 7 long and 5 short Keys. the last often are indiscriminately called Sharps and Flats thro' mistake," he proceeds to explain the "Cliffs." "The uppermost Stave is used for the Treble, signifying that the Notes placed on those Lines and Spaces are to be played with the right Hand. but the lowermost Stave signifying the Bass Cliff is design'd for the Bass, to be play'd with the Left Hand." "If the Treble Notes in a piece of Musick happen to run too low, the lower Stave is used in such a Case, in the same manner as the uppermost, if the Bass Notes should go too high, which is practised in order to prevent so many additional Lines, as not being so easily catch'd by the Eye; and it is for the same reason that now and then a Tenor Cliff is chosen instead of the two usual Cliffs."

A page of the old manual is devoted to the "Harpeggio which derives its denomination from the Harp"; and another long section is taken up with elaborate instructions upon fingering as "The

most material Article in the Art of playing the Harpsichord, in order to avoid breaking the Vibration."

The poverty and feebleness of the melody writing in those days is borne in upon one strikingly after reading the chapter on Ornaments. "Graces in General may be divided into Classes; the first comprehends all those Embellishments and extempore Inventions which a skillful Performer uses, partly to supply a seeming Deficiency, by filling up those Vacuities which the Composer seems to have left on purpose, in order to give to the Performer an opportunity to show the Flexibility of his Voice or the Agility of his Fingers, or partly for varying the frequent repetitions of Passages, which otherwise might tire the Ear. All which require a fertile Genius, Judgement, Taste and a competent Knowledge of Composition."

But of all the contrasts between the music and the instructions of these days and the days that are ours, the greatest is the contrast between the meagreness of expressive annotation about the music, emotional content in the music, emotional capacity in the instrument; and the embarrassment of riches in all those elements in music which we have in our possession to-day.

In the whole of this old tutor the only rules relating to the expressive interpretation of the music

are: "Every Note is to have its adequate degree of Strength and Length" (how the pupil must have blessed the good man for this truly helpful advice!). "The same Propriety requisite in the proper delivery of a Speech, as with regard to Expression, Connection, Distinction and proper Action, is also in some measure to subsist in a musical Performance."

Setting out in my young days as a teacher of high hopes and ideals, a long experience showed me the necessity of possessing my soul in patience when I found that so little of the spirit of music was communicated to pupils by a large proportion of teachers; but when I read the barren pages of this quaint old book, it seems to me that there is a chance for the world still, and that the average teacher of our time would have been regarded as a genius if he had unfolded to the people of 1750 the wonderful riches of his ignorance.

IX.

Chopin : A Centenary Review.

IT is largely through the influence of the personality of noble gentlemen that the world becomes more gentle, less ignoble. Class distinctions—distinctions which divide the refined, the noble, the spiritual, from the rough and worldly people—are as useful as they are universal. And those who desire to see the triumph of a process of levelling are looking but for retrogression and for the millenium of monotony.

The qualities which distinguish a noble gentleman—refinement, cultivation, righteous pride, kindly sensibility, grace and beauty of mind and soul—belong pre-eminently to Chopin. To him belongs also that peculiarly delicate and poetic mental atmosphere which is characteristic of certain types of Polish genius; and to this is added the grace and

finish which are to be found in the higher class of French minds. "He is almost the only one among the eminent composers who was in the best sense an aristocrat . . . . in the sense of personal dignity and self-respect, in gentleness and refinement of manners and feeling." His was a beautiful soul, and that beautiful soul he poured into his music. "Mettez-y donc toute votre ame," was his ambition; and he lived up to it, to the everlasting joy of the world. What the man was in himself he gave expression to in his music. His labour was not to weave a series of sounds into elaborate forms in the hope that the world would accept the result as fine music. This seems, unhappily, to be the aim of many composers of our own day and generation. Chopin had in himself all those qualities of personality, and that necessity and ability to express his personality by the medium of musical sounds, without which a man's compositions will prove to have no more virtue than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And thus it is that in the music of Chopin there are to be recognised the same characteristics which we observe in the man himself; there are the same almost feminine refinement, the same grace and polish of manner and style, the same richness of poetic sensibility, the same atmosphere of aristocratic distinction.

It is well, now and again, to force ourselves out

of the grooves of thought cut by long usage in our minds, and to devise some mode of looking in a fresh way at our chosen heroes, in order that we may estimate their rank with a truer perspective and assimilate their beneficent influence with more fruitful discrimination. And as, in the constitution of this world of ours we have to be content to map out our history in years and periods, a man's centenary is sure to mark so many changed aspects and so many phases of art-life, that it seems a fitting opportunity for such a review. The foundation principles of musical art appear to have undergone such a series of changes during the past hundred years that one is sometimes inclined to ask whether much of what we are now desired to accept is music at all. What common relationship is it possible to discover between Mozart's G minor Symphony and Richard Strauss's "Domestic" symphony? Surely the poetic romanticism of Chopin has run to a riot of revolution. The phases of musical art have changed with such rapidity of late years that we are liable to forget or discount the wonderful originality of Chopin. He belonged to the classical times of the older composers, and yet he was one of the most original and poetic of our romanticists. But the grace and beauty of his personality preserved him from the extravagances which disfigure

much of the work of our later composers of the romantic school.

Those who desire to prove that all innovations in the methods of musical composition, that all the changing phases of music, are progress, are apt to point gleefully to severe contemporary criticisms of works which though now accepted as natural and beautiful, were at the time of their publication condemned as extravagant and reprehensible innovations. Chopin they regard as a delightful and formidable weapon for driving home the truth of their absurd theory. For did not many contemporary critics attack his charming work with as much fury of indignation as if his whole aim had been to destroy the noble art of music? Who could have been more virulant than Moscheles? As for English criticism, what could be more expressive of the common current of opinion than the conversation of Miss Braddon's "Vixen"?

"Mabel asked Violet if she was fond of Chopin.

"'I'm afraid I'm not enlightened enough to care for him as much as I ought,' Vixen answered freshly.

"'Really! Who is your favourite composer?'

"'I think I like Mozart best.'

"'Do you really?' enquired Mabel, looking as if Violet had sunk fathoms lower in her estimation by

this avowal. 'Don't you think he is dreadfully tuney?'

"'I'd rather have written "Voi che sapete" and "Batti, batti" than all Chopin's nocturnes and mazurkas,' retorted Vixen."

Vixen stood for the sentiments of the average musician of sixty years ago, and the innovations of this original romanticist seemed to her little better than gibberish.

And then there is our highly-esteemed critic and journalist, J. W. Davison, writing in 1841 that "M. Chopin is a dealer in the most absurd and hyperbolical extravagances . . . . He does not want ideas, but they never extend beyond eight or sixteen bars at the utmost, and then he is invariably *in nubibus* . . . . The entire works of Chopin present a motley surface of ranting hyperbole and excruciating cacophony."

Indeed, as lately as thirty years ago a famous singer of my acquaintance had travelled so short a distance upon the modern paths in music that his comment upon hearing Chopin's celebrated Polonaise in A flat was: "I tell you I can see the sense of the music of Handel, or Mozart, or Beethoven; but I'm d——d if I can understand that stuff."

These are delightful darts with which to assail those who venture to criticise what seem to them evil tendencies in the art they love, or innovations

introduced under the euphonious name of "progress." But the questions naturally arise: Is there any probable virtue in conservative art criticism; and are there any sound basic principles to be found for criticism in musical art at all? Mr. Hadow, in his fine series of "Studies in Modern Music," lays down a number of critical principles which will be found applicable to most of the finest art of the ages. And it is only by a wide survey of the finest art, in all its branches and throughout history, that any safe general principles for guidance may be found. Such a survey does surely furnish us with a trinity of vital principles. Where can there be discovered any art work long held in esteem by the consensus of the enlightened world which ignored beauty of form, beauty of workmanship, beauty of personality? Those critics who, even where they may prove somewhat in error in the application of their critical principles, pertinaciously press upon their fellow-men the wisdom of adhering to these basic art laws, are likely to do good rather than harm. As for really fine art, it will succeed regardless of their *dictum;* while they act as a curb upon what might, without their restraint, lead on to license. The case is not unlike that of old: "If this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought: but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Both liberalism and conservatism have their valuable part in the economy of things. The watchword of the liberal is progress; the pride of the conservative is the peace and beauty of a settled order of things. And in spite of the warfare of zealots on both sides, progress and settled order are alike aspects of eternal truth. But so infatuated does the extreme wing of the liberals become with the desire for progress that too often they ignore the beauty of settled order, and set their steps towards confusion; while the extreme wing of the conservatives too often become so enamoured of precedent and order that they seat themselves in the comfortable couch of stagnation. And since the extreme liberals are in power to-day in musical art there is the greater need for the restraining influence of conservative criticism.

Sixty years ago, in England, we were accustomed to the pellucid music of the older masters; we were charmed by the loveliness of their melodies (they were "tuney," in Vixen's phrase), by the grace of their style, by the perfection of their form. It was, therefore, no wonder that the conservative critics of those days resented any music offered to the world which seemed to them to lack these virtues. Sixty years ago, too, we were becoming acquainted with the powerfully emotional music of Beethoven. We were not altogether unwilling to receive and accept

him because he was not by any means an unpalatable revolutionary. He accepted in large measure the beauty of the past. Upon past foundations he built up grander art-forms, and added to the pellucid loveliness of an elder day the stamp of his own grand and tumultuous personality. As we approach our own time we find that the tendency is to turn the point of view from the past to the future. We take more pride in breaking down than in building up; we turn from pellucid form to rhapsodical ebullitions of sound; from quiet order to the turbulence of revolution. To all this our sanguine critics give the name "progress." It is the reign of liberalism. But, curious to note, no one is satisfied. We are said to live in an age of art transition; we are told that what now seems turgid, incoherent, ugly, subvertive of all the basic principles of the finest art of the ages, is a dim seeking after a grand new era about to dawn. It reminds me of a friend of mine who always forgot that happiness is a thing of the present, and that if it does not exist in the present the prospect for the future is not hopeful. He found the present out of joint, and so he accustomed himself to regard each passing period as a time of transition after which the day of happiness would arrive. But as each epoch appointed for the time of bliss appeared, off flew happiness to the distant horizon once more, and the baneful day of

ransition was ever present. So is it, unhappily, in ur realm of music to-day. The world still loves eauty; our musicians still know in their heart of earts that beauty is the first law of all art that is ruly great; but beauty is something to be hoped or in the future when this day of transition is assed. The conservative critic has therefore his alue in for ever pointing out that beauty is likely o continue to be a will-o'-the-wisp until we recog- ise that it is the one absolutely essential thing, and hat hoping for it in the future is not the road to its resent attainment.

What has all this to do with Chopin and his usic? It should help to serve as a vindication of he position of those conservative critics who greeted is music with caution, and mingled blame with cant praise. Those who had been imbued with the xquisite lucidity and the lovely forms of the music f an earlier day, would naturally resent the pparently wayward and capricious compositions of his new aspirant for fame; and those who were ulfilled with the cosmopolitan spirit of the great nasters would naturally find little to sympathise vith in the dreamy, introspective expression of ational emotion pervading the compositions of this foreign" Pole. And for the adverse critics there s yet more than this to be said in their vindication. Without doubt there is much of the rhapsodical

element, and there is a lack of cosmopolitan variety in the music of Chopin. And that the peculiar quality of his music limits the range of his appeal is too truly proved by the utterly inadequate and unsympathetic performance of his compositions by but a very few discerning pianists. The conservative critics were therefore right in attempting what seemed to them the useful work of guarding against the overthrow of established principles of wisdom, and of preventing the degeneracy of progress into a riot of revolutionary disaster.

Their apologist may also call attention to the fact that even where condemnation of innovations such as those of Chopin were sometimes too sweeping, it does not always show superior sagacity to be wise after the event. When a man is no longer on his trial before the tribunal of public opinion; when he has been through the mill of the world's judgments; when his fame is securely established, we have had already set forth for us by many critics, and by the common converse of men, the essential character of his work, both in its excellence and in its defects. At the outset of an artist's career there are no such props for the critic; there are no general opinions to make his way easy; and the natural tendency of those who love the established order is, and rightly so, to be suspicious of innovations. The position of the explorer of a

new country, many of whose aspects are at first sight forbidding, who must entirely rely upon his individual judgment in making his estimate of what he finds, is far more difficult than the position of one who visits a well-known land whose history is familiar, whose beauties are all long since discovered, whose land-marks are all mapped out, whose characteristics are settled for ever in the minds of men.

Notwithstanding the judgments of past critics, how, after all these long years of change, do men still regard Chopin?

One of the easiest and safest means for estimating the character and comparative rank of a man of genius is to set him in imagination among different companies of men of fame, and then consider with what class he best accords, and from what classes he differs. This method will be found decidedly efficacious as a help towards realising that peculiar and distinguished atmosphere of poetic grace as well as that delicacy of feeling and aristocratic manner which are characteristic of Chopin. In order to perceive, for example, how far removed he is from the virile but rough writers of England, it is quite enough to imagine him set in the company of Smollett, Dickens, Rudyard Kipling and H. G. Wells. By the force of such a cruel contrast we can at once feel the superiority of his aristocratic man-

ner, his spiritual refinement, his poetic grace and sensibility. It were as just to compare his work with theirs as it would be to compare a delicate and imaginative picture of Turner's, or a graceful etching of Ruskin's, with one of the realistic canvasses of Frith. In such a company Chopin is entirely out of place.

Or if, again, we were to set him in the midst of a gathering of some of our highly-intellectual men of letters, or our poet philosophers—in such a company as that of Fielding, Thackeray, Macaulay, Carlyle; or of Butler, Cowper, Wordsworth, Browning; do we feel that there he would find himself one of a band of congenial spirits? Surely not! We feel that they, far more than he, were either busy practical men, at home in the affairs of that stirring and practical world to which we all belong; or that they were serious thinkers on the mysteries of life, anxious to make straight the crooked paths of men's higher thought. Chopin was apart from all this. He was a dreamer of romantic dreams. His spirit was far more delicate, his nature was far more ethereal than theirs. He would have found himself a stranger in the haunts and thoughts of all these men busied with the concerns of our life and our world.

How, then, if we were to bid him to enter into the company of the kingly souls of earth; would he

find his true home as an equal and familiar in the presence of Bach, Dante, Shakespeare, Handel, Milton, Michael Angelo, Mozart, Beethoven? It is not possible. The strength of imagination, the commanding majesty, the force of personality, the cosmopolitan nature, the grand manner, which are common to the great immortals, do not belong to the works and character of Chopin. While he is immeasurably the superior of such writers of rough mould as Dickens, Kipling or Wells, by virtue of his poetic refinement, his aristocracy of style and his loveliness of speech; he is as immeasurably the inferior of the imaginative kings of the world, in strength, in robustness, in depth of imagination, in universality of genius. His lack of the highest attributes of greatness has again and again been justly noticed by our best critical writers. Hadow says with truth and force, that "The want of virility which has been noted in his character appears beyond all question in his music; leaving untouched all the grace and tenderness, all the rare and precious qualities of workmanship, but relaxing into an almost inevitable weakness at any crisis which demands sustained force and intensity. When he is at his strongest we miss that sense of reserve power, that quiet, irresistible force, 'too full for sound or foam,' which characterises the dignity of the noblest art." . . . . "Even his melody is

never sublime, never at the highest level." And Dannreuther, himself a cultivated and appreciative musician of the romantic school, but withal a discriminating critic, has no doubt that Chopin lacks the essential elements of that art upon which the world sets its hall mark of greatness: the emotional materials he embodies are not of the very highest; his moral nature was not cast in a sublime mould, and his intellect was not of the profoundest; his bias was romantic and sentimental rather than heroic—but be his material ever so exotic, he invariably makes amends by the exquisite refinement of his diction.

Where, then, shall we find his rightful place among the world's sons of art? From time to time in the world's history there have been writers and artists who, while they are lacking somewhat in the grand Catholic traits of the highest genius, yet possess a distinctive and captivating charm of their own; who, even though at first they may seem to us strange and foreign in character and temperament, yet by some sweetness of nature, by some winsomeness of speech, steal their way into the hearts of a large number of their fellow-men. Herrick, Sterne, Shelley, Keats, Xavier de Maistre, Charles Lamb, are examples of such men of curiously individual personality.

Of such was Chopin. Though he may never win

a place in the great heart of the world; yet he will always be dear to those who are in sympathy with his peculiar genius. There are many causes which combine to limit the number of those who can appreciate him fully. First of all he belongs to a people of distinctive and peculiar national character. It has been said that genius is cosmopolitan, and that Chopin is no more Polish in his genius than Shakespeare is English, or Goethe German in his genius. But although Shakespeare and Goethe were men of vastly wider genius than Chopin, still Shakespeare is emphatically English, and Goethe emphatically German. And the English and the German mind are more cosmopolitan than the Polish mind. That Chopin was a typical Polish genius we have not only our own insight to tell us, but we have the indisputable authority of his admiring countryman, Count Stanislas Tarnowski: "Chopin alone can give to foreigners the idea of that inspiration, original, melancholy, homely and patriotic, which is the feature of Polish poetry, because his music is, as it were, a fulfilment and a translation of that poetry. Therefore, in the history of our country his music has its great significance and merit. It represents to the outside world the essential character of our natures." Besides his being characteristically a Pole, Chopin's type of mind was quite unlike the broad, Catholic type of

mind which makes its appeal to all sorts and conditions of men. He was tender, melancholy, dreamy, ethereal, romantic; and in his work, a lyricist. In his own gentle and limited sphere he was markedly original; he is a poetic creator with a spiritual atmosphere entirely his own. Like most lyric poets, the range of his genius was very circumscribed. And not unlike many of our modern lyric poets, a brooding melancholy casts its sombre colouring over nearly all his work. This taint alone would for ever shut him out from the empyrean. It is a taint which some of his admirers foolishly deny; and it is a taint which we of this age are often apt to pass over without observation. For we are accustomed to live in an art atmosphere pervaded by it. It fits our mood too often; we allow ourselves to be steeped in its influence. Yet it is very near akin to disease, and it is never found in the art which the world ranks as masterpieces. And it is not to be forgotten that sympathy with art which embodies in a beautiful and attractive form the atmosphere of the age in which we live is likely to pervert our judgment and lead us to estimate that art wrongly. There is one means by which we can realise vividly the contrast between the strength and robustness of the great men of the earth and the brooding melancholy of the verse of Tennyson or the music of Chopin. It is this—to isolate ourselves for a time from all

the art which embodies this characteristic; and to choose as the companions of our minds during this period of isolation such virile writers as Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, Goethe, Handel, Mozart, Bach. Such an isolation and such a companionship are the more necessary in a time not marked especially by robust healthy-mindedness, if we are to purify our own music or to appraise such music as that of Chopin at its true worth.

As there are many of the admirers of Chopin who might not only fail to recognise this trait so fatal to the finest art, but might resent any such charge as that of melancholy against the music of their hero, it may be well once more to quote from his Polish brother and friend who knew him so intimately: "It is not surprising that the over-sensitive and irritable Poles developed an almost diseased melancholy. Among these beings, sick, it may be, because sorrowful unto death, Chopin stands out as possessing one of the most refined and delicate of organisations." "Disappointments poured much bitterness into his life. All this, preying upon a tragic nature, brought him into a condition bordering on despair which is perceptible throughout his compositions." And yet again—"Chopin's sorrow breaks forth freely in all his compositions. The mazurka for him is a consecrated sanctuary of tender and melancholy dreams." All this is true, and

it is said by one who knew him far better than we know him, and admired him as the genius who was to bring glory and citizenship in the realm of music to Poland.

Yet, in spite of the limitations of the genius of Chopin; in spite of that lack of robustness and that melancholy which constitutes one of his chief weaknesses; in spite of the comparative narrowness of his field of labour, still, there are multitudes who can join in the asseveration of Hadow: "No vicissitude of fortune, no changing fashion of art, can ever obliterate from our memory the image of Frederic Chopin."

What has he done so as to win this abiding love and esteem? His supreme achievement is that he has enriched the literature of the piano by a wealth of compositions greater than that contributed by any other composer with the exception of Beethoven. All his best work was written for the piano; and all his best work is beautiful work. And how providential it must now seem to we pianists that his incarnation was secured for the world before our day. For ours is the day of huge orchestras, of huge "symphonic poems," of multitudinous grandiloquence; and one might safely assert that had Chopin's fame not been securely established already, his gentle voice would not have made itself heard amongst us now, "charmed he never so sweetly."

Those who regard the immense volume of sound produced by our modern orchestral bands at the bidding of our modern composers as a fair compensation for the thoughtful and beautiful imaginations of our musical poets of the past; those who deny the province and mission of music as a self-contained art in favour of a hybrid concourse of programmatic sounds neither edifying, nor beautiful, nor musical; those who desire to see the crudest realistic effects substituted for the ethereal splendour of the music of a day gone by—all these would laugh to scorn the appearance of such a gentle-souled composer as Chopin to-day. But happily for himself and the world, his earthly race is run, his fights are fought and his fame is secure for ever.

He is our tenderest and most original lyrical composer; and in his ambition and labour to attain finish of workmanship he calls to our remembrance those beautiful lines of Dante:

> "Lo gran disio
> Dell' eccellenza, ove mio core intese."

"In phraseology he is a master whose felicitous perfection of style is one of the abiding treasures of the art of music." "Besides being the poet of the piano, the genius of the instrument, he is a singer in that high sense in which Keats and Coleridge and Tennyson are singers. He tells of new things well worth hearing, and finds new ways of saying

them. The emotions that he expresses are not of the highest: his bias is always romantic and sentimental. But in the bulk of his work, be the sentiment what it may, he makes amends by the utmost refinement of diction. With him the manner of doing a thing is the essence of the thing done." Finally, when we have made due note of the femininity, the languid grace, the brooding melancholy of Chopin, and understand that these are not always the wholesomest tonic for the human spirit; when we recognise "that he can claim no place among the few greatest masters of the world"; we can, nevertheless, feel that there is still left ample to love and to admire. There are his fascinating Polish characteristics; his romantic tenderness of sentiment; his originality both in forms and in musical ideas; his richness of imagination; his wealth of exquisite melody; his delicate craftsmanship; and his peculiar and witching charm that is quite indescribable and must be felt to be known. These can never fail us while we have ears to hear and hearts to understand.

"The elements of myth and legend that have already gathered round his name may almost be said to find their counterpart in his music; it is ethereal, unearthly, enchanted, an echo from the melodies of Kubla Khan."

X.

Some Reflections Occasioned by the Centenary of Robert Schumann.

"Through Formalism her progress lay
Arrived at Form, there let her stay!
For if she still must onward press,
'Tis but few steps to formlessness."
—"History of Music." (WILLIAM WATSON)

THERE is no end to the peculiarities of genius. Some geniuses are far more eccentric as men than as creators of art; others are far more eccentric in their works than in their characters as men. Beethoven would absent-mindedly appear publicly in his night-shirt, half-shaved, entirely unconscious of the spectacle he presented; Sam Johnson frightened well-ordered people by his uncouth habits when eating; it is said of Professor Stewart Blackie that during his honeymoon he quite forgot that he was married, and upon being shown into the

room of his hotel and noticing some feminine garments hanging there, he flew at the waiter in a rage; yet no one of these great men could rightly be called eccentric in the character of his work. On the other hand, it is easy to call to remembrance men whose conventional manner of life was in entire contrast to the eccentricity of their writings. Lawrence Sterne was such a man. Schumann, too, was a well-informed and orderly member of informed and well-ordered society; but his work, or a large proportion of it, may justly have been regarded as eccentric by those whose taste was educated upon the grand models of earlier days. Indeed, if it were not that we are in danger of losing all realisation of the meaning of eccentricity; if it were not that eccentricity and conventionality are rapidly becoming synonymous terms in the musical art of to-day, much of Schumann's music might still very well be called eccentric.

The professor of literature in one of our universities, when criticising some of the obscure writing of our time, once said to me, with much conviction—"I have a passion for lucidity." I fear I am still old-fashioned enough to have a passion for lucid and beautiful form in music; and where I find that, as in the case of Schumann, the terms whimsical, odd, peculiar, eccentric, rhapsodical, obscure, are not inapplicable to a man's work, I cannot find it in my

heart to accord him a place among the kings of art, no matter how irrepressible the enthusiasm of the day may be for the evangelists of eccentricity, or the apostles of "progress."

Music is the noblest of the arts; and in music, more than in anything else, if the compositions of a man are to be in the "grand style," if they are to rank among the masterpieces of the world; they must be the issue of a mind overflowing with music; they must be the product of a genuine and irresistible inspiration; they must be the creations of an imagination to which music is not "a conquered country but a native home"; they must have nobility of personality, lucid beauty of form and exquisite finish of workmanship. The character of Schumann is worthy of great praise, but to call him, in a high sense, a noble personality, would be to over-praise. That his ideal was lucid beauty of form, or exquisite finish of workmanship, no critic would affirm; his admirers would be rather apt to deny it with scorn. And that his music was the outcome of a spontaneously musical nature, his laboured incoherence, his obscure rhapsodising, his rather formless improvisations, too often show.

He was rather a man of large intellectual capacity, of unbounded energy, disposed by strong inclination to the study of music. He worked at law and at literature. At either of these he could have

succeeded well; but he preferred to follow the pursuit of music as his life's labour, and set himself methodically to master its various branches one by one. The very fact that he worked almost exclusively in one province of musical composition, then in another, as if he felt that each branch was a new province to be conquered, was evidence rather of persistent adherence to a systematic course of self-appointed labour than of a natural and irresistible impulse to pour forth beautiful music from an overflowing soul.

The great art of the world was not, as a rule, produced for the purpose of exemplifying new progressive theories of art either evolved or adopted by the creators of the art. It was generally the spontaneous and natural expression of noble personality embodied in existing art-forms, or in art-forms adapted or modified from existing forms so as the more adequately to express the imaginations of the artist who used them as his medium. Homer, Virgil, Dante, Chaucer, Burns; Canova, Michael Angelo, Titian; did not torment their souls with the labour of acting as champions of "progressive" theories of art; and yet their work is an abiding joy.

Schumann, on the contrary, was an ardent advocate of all that is popularly called progressiveness in musical composition. If this meant advocacy of real progress no thoughtful critic could hesitate to

welcome its advent; but it is to be remembered that innovation, change, or revolution is not always necessarily true progress.

One of the animating principles of the romantic progressives is a most laudable principle. They declared that if musical art was to become finer, it must be by making it capable of expressing more emotional, more spiritually human content. To this they added a corollary, not quite so laudable. They declared that the classical forms of the past exercised a deadening influence upon the play of human emotion. This principle and its corollary directed their path. Imagining that the music of earlier days was too dependent upon architectural beauty, they thought the right road to reform was, to minimise the importance of beauty of structure, and to magnify the importance of emotional content. Schumann's championship of this wrong principle has been bearing evil fruit ever since his day.

The conservative critic, on the other hand, while he, with equal enthusiasm, values the "spiritual grace" of emotional content, clearly perceives that it may be sought after at too dire a cost. He holds fast to his faith that structural beauty is one of the abiding principles of all the finest art of the world; but he is so far in agreement with the progressives in believing that form without spirit is as dead as faith without works. He is critical as to the equality

of the emotions expressed in music; and he knows too well that when men give themselves over to the laudation of emotional ebullitions, and attack the beauty of structure, "'tis but a few steps to formlessness."

If we turn to the example of the companion art of poetry, which was equally affected by the modern wave of romanticism, which was equally decided in its revolt against formalism; do we find that this movement was heralded by an outcry against the poetic forms of the past, by a theory that the poetic forms of the past were inadequate as a vehicle of expression for the tumultuous emotions of romanticism? Do we find a desire on the part of these poets to ignore the settled laws of verse, and to substitute for them some uncouth concourse of words fulfilled with a riot of emotion? In order to prove the reverence of our romantic poets for lucidity, law, order and beauty of both form and workmanship, it is enough to summon as witnesses Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Arnold and William Watson. If they enriched the poetry of the romantic age by deeper thought and more varied emotion, this was so much the more beauty added to the formalism of the age of Addison and Pope. But they never imagined that they could exalt the art of poetry by depreciating the value and importance of formal beauty and finish of workmanship.

It is no doubt well that in music our art-forms should be modified, expanded, developed. Each great composer thus modifies, expands and develops them, in order the better to serve his purposes of self-expression. Such work is progressive, not iconoclastic. There is nothing but praise for the principle that music should become more and more pregnant with spiritual significance, and less and less devoted to pure formalism; but this excellent principle is more likely to become effective where progress consists in a very gradual expansion of the finest forms already evolved, than where it consists in a revolt against the formal restraints of too exuberant passion.

In the end it is the personality of the composer that determines the quality of the spiritual content. There can be no disputing this fact until we can get more out of a man than is in him, by the application of some complex and progressive theory of art. Fine emotional content simply means the embodiment of the noble emotions of noble personality. Beyond this it is not possible to go, so far as content is concerned. We may express it beautifully in a beautiful form with exquisite finish of workmanship; or we may injure or obscure its expression by formlessness or rough workmanship. But when we talk in triumphant tones of progress, do we for one moment believe that, in the quality of personality,

or in the expression of personality, we have advanced a single step beyond the music of Bach, Handel or Beethoven? In their personalities they were unique; and in the expression of their personalities they held fast to the true faith that structural beauty is one of the abiding principles of the finest art of the world. Thus they added to a human nobility which we shall never supersede, a beauty of form and workmanship which, in our haste after "progress," in our championship of Schumann's principles of progressiveness, we are in sore danger of losing.

It was not alone as a musical composer that Schumann made a distinguished name for himself. Everyone knows how in the world of letters he became celebrated for his critical writings in the "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik" on music and musicians. By his remarkable ability in that field of labour he produced what have been for many years regarded as model examples for the musical critic. And his criticisms furnish us, not only with illuminating hints on his own mental characteristics—hints which help us to explain some of the peculiarities of his music—but they furnish us also incidentally with an interesting commentary on the comparative standards of musical and literary criticism.

Oddity, eccentricity, whimsicality, scrappiness, rhapsodical extravagance, are qualities which one would naturally look for in the work of a mind

given over to the influence of Jean Paul Richter. An extraordinary and composite character was that same Jean Paul. "The reason why he is so little known except by name, is that of all great writers he is one of the most difficult to read, and, it may be added, to understand. No reader who has not the strongest constitution can struggle through his tangled thickets of encyclopædic learning, his tortuous wit, his dreary wastes of digression and dulness, his hot-houses of tropical sentimentality. For literary form, for order, harmony or restraint, he has not the slightest respect. The wildest improbabilities, the wildest extravagances of fancy, are indulged in without check." Yet for all this he has passages of imaginative splendour not easily to be matched in literature. He was Schumann's guide, counsellor and friend in the realm of things intellectual. And it is the deliberate opinion of our excellent critic, Hadow, that the composer's "artistic nature remained permanently subject to the enervating spell of Richter's influence." With such a key to the mental characteristics of Schumann, is it any wonder then if we discover in much of his music the defects of oddness, whimsicality, obscurity, digressiveness and the lack of just proportions and symmetry of form?

His musical criticisms, while they contain many excellent art principles and many just and discern-

ing judgments upon composers and their compositions, have exactly the same faults as his music. Upon the whole, they are rather "rhapsodies on musical works, or poetical imagery lavished on musical subjects, than criticisms properly speaking." The evils of his influence in this sphere again, may easily be traced throughout the course of musical criticism since his time. Yet, in spite of these defects, Fanny Raymond Ritter fondly imagines that his musical criticisms are on an equality of merit with the literary criticisms of Matthew Arnold or Saint Beuve; and Sir Hubert Parry ventures to assert that they are without a parallel in musical art! If we are to credit the statement of Parry, what is to be said of the whole province of musical criticism?

No reader of cultivation who has taken the trouble to explore the fields of musical and literary criticism, even in England, can help deploring the contrast between the poverty of the production in the musical field, and the wealth of the production in the literary field. In France and Germany the contrast is almost equally great.

Our literary criticism is quite a literature in itself. In the finest of our writers of literary criticisms we find a combination of qualities which make this kind of writing full of fascination for the cultivated reader. There we find wealth of information, or

research, of keen reflection, of illuminating insight, of suggestive comparison, of admirable analysis, of telling illustration. And there we find added to all this, the charm of distinction of style. The best of our literary writers are men whose whole being was saturated with the spirit of what was finest in literature; men of wide appreciation; men in whose judgments there is no lack of proportion; men who have a sound grasp of the basic principles of great art; men who write from a love of their subject, and who spared no pains to make their literary style worthy of the themes they touched.

When we turn, on the other hand, to the field of musical criticism, we find, upon the whole, a painful lack of nearly all the qualities which combine to make our literary criticism so fascinating and instructive. We find volumes of affected verbosity, of garrulous inanities, of narrow pronouncements, of judgments and statements of principles which show a general poverty of thought, general failure to appreciate the abiding principles of true art, lack of scholarly research. Most of these writings fail to charm, for their lack of style is simply deplorable.

The contrast between the wealth of our literary criticism, on the one hand, and the poverty of our musical criticism, on the other, will be vividly realised, first, by the juxtaposition of a few of

the names of our best writers of literary criticism with the names of the great bulk of our best writers on musical criticism; and secondly, by a comparison of the style of work done by well-known writers in both fields.

On the one side we have Leslie Stephen, Aubrey de Vere, Stopford Brooke, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Brimley, Macaulay, De Quincey, Coleridge, Walter Pater, Walter Bagehot, James Russell Lowell, Matthew Arnold, Frederick Harrison, Herbert Paul, Augustine Birrell, Taine, Saint Beuve, Lessing; and these are but a small number whose names at once are presented to the memory out of many whose writings are full of beauty and instruction. On the other side when we name Heathcote Statham (a writer on architecture); Grove (an editor and man of letters); Otto Jahn (an archæologist); Hadow (a Fellow of Oxford); Sir Hubert Parry, Dannreuther and Professor Niecks, professional musicians; have we not almost exhausted the list of those who can put forward any just claim to the title of a writer of distinction? And has a single one even of these few written with the winning charm of style, with the fascinating eloquence, with the touch of genius which we find in the works of not an insignificant number of the literary writers already named? When we turn aside from these few writers of real culture who treat of musical subjects, and consider

the many volumes of musical criticism which receive high praise as they issue from the press, we realise that readers of any refinement, learning and taste, must at once be repelled by the insipidity of the reflections and the crudeness of the style. It is not easy to believe that even the hope of discovering here and there a little instruction would be found sufficient inducement to travel through these mazes of verbiage. As I glance over the shelves of my library I can recall the painful labour to which I have submitted when reading volume after volume of such writing as I deplore.

A single example will illustrate the whole matter, and will provide an eloquent commentary to the truth of the statements here made.

Walter Bagehot, in his essay on Shelley, makes an apt reference to Shakespeare and Sophocles in these words: "The conception of Lear is that of an old gnarled oak, gaunt and quivering in the stormy sky, with old leaves and withered branches tossing in the air, and all the complex growth of a hundred years creaking and nodding to its fall. That of Œdipus is the peak of Teneriffe, as we fancied it in our childhood, by itself and snowy, above among the stormy clouds, heedless of the angry winds and the desolate waves—single, ascending, alone."

Here is an example to be matched by thousands in

our literary criticism. In it are to be found the riches of learning eloquently applied to the matter in hand; keenness of intellectual insight which seizes upon the important aspects of the subject and presents them with graphic power; here is the charm of style.

One or two sentences from "Mezzotints in Modern Music," by James Huneker, will serve equally well to exemplify the pitiful contrast when we turn to the field of musical criticism: "Brahms is never a little master, although he can work exceeding fine and juggle for you by the hour the most gorgeous balls of bitter-sweet virtuosity. He is not, I say, always the pedant, and he can be as dull as ditch water two times out of ten. He has his feminine side—his songs—but in the main he is a muscular male, not given to over-expansion and not always companionable." Or, once again, speaking of the playing of Chopin's music, he writes: "What is left us in all this furious carnage, what undefiled in this continual rape, this filching of a man's spiritual goods? Some few works unassailed, thanks to the master—some noble compositions whose sun-smitten summits are at once a consolation and an agony. To strive to reach those wonderful peaks of music is granted but to the few." Here we have bombast, verbosity, bad English, undiluted nonsense, offered to us as musical criticism. And these are not iso-

lated paragraphs; they are typical specimens of many thousands of pages of writing on musical subjects whose perusal is a pain and a humiliation to any reader of learning and taste.

From the average musical criticism which is published, it is a relief to turn to Schumann; for in spite of the many faults of his journalistic work, in spite of his romantic whimsicalities, his digressive meanderngs, his general looseness and lack of balance, he was less bombastic, less hysterical, more learned, and more proportionate in his judgments than many of our musical critics of a later day. But I should give an unqualified denial to the statement that, as a critical writer, he was the equal of Otto Jahn, Grove, Statham, Hadow, Parry or Niecks.

The gift of fluency is often the ruin of its possessor. And Schumann had this dangerous gift. Had he written but one-half of what he has written; had he polished that surviving half with persistent pains; had he been less fascinated by the desire to revolt from the paths of former traditions; had he turned away his face from the road that ultimately leads to chaos; had he remembered that if music must still onward press from form "'Tis but few steps to formlessness"; then he would have produced a finer life's fruit, for he was a great man. He had genuine gifts, both melodic and harmonic; he had powerful emotional characteristics; and he

had sufficient originality to ensure his protection from the dangers or weakness of commonplace. Instead of pruning, curbing and selecting, from his exuberant flow of fancies, he seems to have taken delight in stimulating his invention by improvising at the piano for hours at a time. And yet how well he knew the better part; for does he not offer this excellent advice: "Let our composer stand in dread of a reputation for productivity, and in the place of many insipid works let him give one healthy, well-considered creation"?

Lest these comments on the methods and work of Schumann be considered unjust, it would be fair to try the experiment of playing over the whole of his piano compositions consecutively in a few days. In the Breitkopf and Härtel edition there are about eight hundred pages. It is thus, by both a comprehensive and a concentrated experience, that one can perceive with accuracy the quality of emotion, the character of personality, the standard of workmanship, the structural value, of these compositions. There are many fine moments; there are many beautiful conceptions, there are many lucid lyrics; there are many passages of exquisite craftsmanship; but, upon the whole, he calls to mind the defects of his mental master, Jean Paul. "No reader who has not the strongest constitution can struggle through his tangled thickets, his tortuous wit, his dreary wastes

of digression and dulness. For form, order or restraint, he has no adequate respect." Such defects as those which are set forth even by his ardent admirers are not to be found in the really great art of the world. Imagine for a moment Mozart or Bach, "dreamily playing together all the notes of the scale"; "rambling on through all sorts of harmony with the pedal down"! Imagine any of the real kings of music "comparatively indifferent to what is technically known as musical form"! It is quite impossible. It would be as easy to imagine Ruskin drawing the lines of one of his etchings at random; or Titian careless what mixture of colours he chanced to get when he took his brush from the palette. Schumann was not sufficiently fervid in the true faith that noble art must always have, not alone nobility of personality, but also beauty and symmetry of form, as well as exquisite finish of workmanship.

Schumann has many admirers; he has ardent champions among our best writers on musical subjects; and he deserves much admiration and much praise. For, revolutionary as his ideas were in large measure, he had intellectual power enough, originality enough, and musical ability enough, to achieve great things. But for all his powers, and for all this praise, we cannot but observe that he has failed to win a way for the greater part of his composi-

tions in the heart of the public. If we look either in the home, or in the concert hall, we shall find that of the eight hundred pages of his compositions for the piano there are only a comparatively small number to be heard. A few have pushed their way to popularity: the "Etudes Symphonique," the "Fasschingschwank," the "Carnaval," the "Kreisleriana," the "Novelletten," the "Kinderscenen," the "Album for the Young" and some other short lyrics. But the mass of his work does not appeal to the general public; nor does it afford to the virtuoso sufficiently telling opportunities for display.

It is interesting to notice how some of his apologists make a virtue even of his defects. In defending the scrappiness of his work, Sir Hubert Parry tells us that "his bent was towards short, vivid pieces, in which he expressed *some definite idea.*" Combarieu maintains that it "is impertinent, inartistic, and beside the question to ask the meaning of a melody," and he informs us that the business of music is to express emotion in its broader characteristics. What, then, is this "definite idea" of Sir Hubert Parry? He proceeds to say that these short, vivid pieces of Schumann "belonged to the same order as Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words,' but were far more characteristic and original, and more poetical and romantic." It is curious to observe the flow of the waves of fashionable criticism which

pass across our thought from time to time. Just as it was the mode some years ago to follow the lead of Matthew Arnold in his belittlement of Macaulay; just as it became the fashion to regard him as a "Philistine" whose critical writings were too mechanical, too simple and lucid, too defective in serious and obscure philosophic and psychological reflections; so, in like manner, it became the "correct thing" in advanced musical coteries to speak slightingly of the beautiful music of Mendelssohn. His music was too graceful, too lucid, too simply beautiful; it was too utterly lacking in the progressive emotional tumult and in the formal obscurity so highly prized in a romantic and "poetic" age. But as Macaulay has come to his own again, so we may hope that our pure and lovely lyricist, Mendelssohn, may turn our hearts once more from the "anarchy" which our philosophic musician, Combarieu, so sorely laments, and lead us back to simple beauty.

"Even when Schumann went to work to make large works and long movements, he constructed them by knitting a series of little lyrics together in a style more like mosaic than the continuous development of the sonatas by earlier great masters. But the standard of his ideas was so high, and his treatment of the instrument so rich in colour, that he raised this branch of art to a point which it had never attained before, and left a mass of genuine

lyrics which are the most enduring and enjoyable of all the thousands of such works which have come into existence in the present century." This is generous and whole-hearted praise; but is it altogether judicious? Had it been lavished, in a modified form, upon the best of the songs of Schumann, there would have been more reason and juster proportion in the eulogium.

Song writing was his proper musical bent. It suited him although he had not the same melodic gifts or the same intuitive facility for composing for the voice, as Handel or Mozart. One advantage of this style of writing was, that the words kept him from too much obtrusion of his own subjective fancies; another was, that the poetry prevented his wandering off into dreary digressions, and through the mazes of formlessness. The emotional monotony, too, which is to be felt wearyingly when undergoing a long course of Schumann's piano compositions, is avoided in his songs. The subjects of the poems directed his thought and emotions into channels more varied and more interesting than the solitary course of his own romantic musings. Moreover, we have the testimony of the composer himself to the fact that song writing was the form of composition most congenial to him: "I can hardly tell you how delightful it is to write for the voice compared with instrumental composition, and what a

stir and tumult I feel within me when I sit down to it." So far from writing beautiful melodies largely for the sake of their own loveliness, and adding neat and ornamental accompaniments to them, as was too often the practice of earlier days, Schumann's aim and success were, to create unified poetic wholes, in which words, melody and accompaniment were equally powerful, equally an integral part of the unified structure, equally effective in helping to create a complete work of art. What he sacrificed in melodic beauty and flow, he gained in dramatic effect. Into the spirit of each lyric poem he entered with entire sympathy, and incorporated it in music so suitable that it seems as if the resultant organic whole might as well have been created complete by the poet himself.

Of his orchestral compositions, his chamber music, his labours in the other fields of vocal music, much has been said in praise by Grove, Hadow, Parry, Niecks and others who love him, and glory in his striking influence upon the trend of musical composition.

Here it will suffice to recapitulate in a rapid summary, the general characteristics to which some detailed attention has already been called. In Schumann we have a man of remarkable intellectual power; a man who might have applied his talents to any learned walk in life with unusual success; a man who loved study and the cultivation of the

mind; a man of theories and problems, who laid out a course for himself and pursued it successfully in spite of sore obstacles and grievous disabilities; a man of high principles and generous nature, large-minded and tolerant; an intellectual progressive, to use the phraseology of the day; but not one whose music is inevitable, not one from whom music poured spontaneously as light from the sun, songs from birds, melodies from Mozart; not one who had the commanding imagination, or the kingly voice of the great seers of art. His was a strenuous life, a laboriously intellectual life and the pain of his labours is to be felt in his compositions. All the progressives must admire and love him; but old-fashioned people who measure the greatness of a man's art work by the standards of what is noblest in all the art of the world, can hardly be expected to speak of him in terms so laudatory that nothing further is left to be said for his mighty peers.

Yet, when sometimes, with pain, we are compelled to contrast old standards with modern tendencies in musical art, let us acknowledge, at all events, that Schumann, in spite of his defects, probed to the root of the matter when he said that "fine music is the outflow of a noble soul, careless whether the writing be for the applause of the crowd or for the pleasures of solitude, but always the expression of an elevated mind."

APPENDIX.

SOME of the foregoing articles gave rise to discussion and comment in the columns of the "Musical Standard." We reprint extracts from the articles and correspondence that appeared therein.

PROGRAMME MUSIC.

A Reply by David Irvine.

THE article by Mr. J. Alfred Johnstone on programme music, lacks that philosophical basis which I shall here attempt to supply. Naturally we must at once fall back on explicit definitions, and every such definition demands treatment from two points of view, viz., the subjective and the objective. Otherwise, unless both are treated, confusion is bound to arise. The definitions which I am about to supply will not be contradicted in the course of what is written. *Absolute music is that whose form is dictated by exclusively musical traditions. Programme music is that whose form may always be referred to some thought consciously present in the composer's mind.* A strict sonata must therefore always be absolute music; a strict overture always programme music. It is, of course,

quite possible to attach an overture to any opera without regard for the operatic programme. Mozart's "Figaro" or Beethoven's "Fidelio" overture, for example. Rossini substituted another overture for the one originally intended for the "Barbier," and everyone accepts it as readily as any other, because programme entered in no case into one or the other overture. But in the case of Wagner no substitution is possible without creating an incongruity which no one would stand, least of all the composer. It is this relationship between the music whose form is determined by a conscious thought in the mind of the composer, and the music whose form is not so determined, that constitutes the objective feature of a definition of programme music. It seems, too, quite a simple and comprehensible definition, as indeed all purely objective definitions are.

The subjective definition is harder, because one may read an opinion into a piece of music which the composer and many other people would repudiate, while from the point of view of the imaginative individual the reading may be quite sincere. Surely no less programmatic composer ever existed than Bach, but none the less "Carmen Sylva" read into his "Wohltemperirte Klavier" poetical meanings that had never in the slightest degree suggested themselves to others, and whose statement, on the part of "Carmen Sylva," awakened no response. On the other hand, the programme of the "Lohengrin" prelude can never differ in the minds of thousands of people, for the very simple reason that here the form of the music is absolutely determined by a poetical thought, not coming from this or that irresponsible enthusiast, but from the composer himself.

Often, again, a composer may determine the programme of his composition, while I, as hearer, remain astounded at the offered relationship. To this class of programmatic composition belong Berlioz's "King Lear," Tchaïkovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" and Volkmann's "Richard the Third" overtures. I mention specially the last because the mere introduction of "The Campbells are Coming" does not turn the overture into true programme music. I get no know-

ledge whatever of King Lear, Romeo and Juliet or Richard the Third from these overtures, which fact, however, may not debar my enjoyment of them as music. The "Tannhäuser" overture, however, is purely programme music in both the objective and the subjective sense, because its form is poetically laid down by a conscious thought, and my definition cannot radically differ from that of another's, including the composer's. Wagner could not, in his later days at any rate, even approach the composition of music without the form being determined by a poetical thought. In Volume IV of the "Wagner Life" (p. 361), Mr. Ellis quotes Wagner as terming himself "a poor amateur who can trust himself to deal with music only when he may hope to realise poetic aims therein," and Prof. Niecks in his book quotes him to the effect that he could not compose twenty bars of music of any value without having been poetically stimulated. Thus, whatever Wagner himself may have thought of programme music as it exists at the hands of certain composers who futilely attempt to illustrate a poetical label, or to enhance the poetical meaning (already done ample artistic justice to by the poetical genius), there can be little doubt that according to the above definition Wagner could only be a programme composer and nothing else.

As to those multitudinous pieces of music—dance or march, for instance—which are programmatic in the sense of rhythm, but non-programmatic in the sense of not being determined by thought, it is hard to write sensibly, for the reader will persist in catching one up if the music is said to be determined by traditional musical form, and in running one down if it is asserted that a form external to the musical tradition does not determine the music. Evidently in Mozart's "Turkish March," or in the march movement of Tchaïkovsky's Sixth Symphony there is a wide divergence from the form of Bach's preludes and fugues, or that of Mozart's ordinary sonatas. The march or minuet in a Mozart composition already approaches programme, but in Wagner the form of the music is so invariably that of a poetical thought, that it is precisely his marches which

depart from programme. Scrutinise as closely as I like the *sostenuto* of the "Tannhäuser" march, and I can deduce no programme at all, even with the help of the words sung to it. The *juste milieu*, then, between absolute and programme music is the distinct reference of the form of the music to a determining poetical thought: first of all, however, consciously entertained in the mind of the composer, not merely imaginatively introduced by any listener. Coming now to Mr. Johnstone's article, I think the above serves to lay a foundation that renders his judgments—or many of them—null and void. For instance: "As programmes come in music goes out" is a dictum that experience destroys. It would need to run: "As the conscious element enters into the art, the form of the art changes." I simply deny that the preludes and fugues of Bach are more music than the prelude to "Lohengrin." Those composers whose music is programmatic and yet dull as ditch water in comparison to the poem which they so futilely would illustrate, are men who are being falsely guided, and devoid of artistic principle. No one must judge programme music from them. I make no attempt to judge the mere musical quality of, say, such a work as Bantock's "Omar." What I do know, however, is that a notable incongruity wrecks an existing artistic impression. "Omar" becomes, for the time, a perfect bore; Bantock has cut the ground from under his own feet so far as the possibility exists of my here appreciating his music. The musical inspiration, such as it is, is not reflected back one bit on the poetical inspiration, while the music, thank goodness, could not cast any reflection on it were it bad music. I refuse to judge one by the other, but the poem I did judge long before ever it entered into Mr. Bantock's head to attach some music to it. Why, passes my comprehension. Yet apart from this forced and unwelcome connection, I offer no impertinent criticism on the music as music. What I do assert is, it is not programme music in relation to "Omar." Supposing some poet who had never read "Omar," but who had a keen musical sense, were asked to reconstruct a poem from Bantock's music, does any-

one think that Fitzgerald would be the result; of course, not meaning textually, but in the spirit! How different would be the result were the "Lohengrin" prelude or "The Flying Dutchman" overture handed to a person with a good dramatic and musical sense, apart from all knowledge of the operas. The form of such compositions and the content hang closely together, the proof lying in a justifiable reference of the music to the form, which is in no sense traditional. Not only are Bantock's music and the poetry, which serves him nominally or as label as form, incongruous, but the long since certified artistic enjoyment of the poem, a thing of delightful swiftness in its appeal, is now irritatingly destroyed by my being asked to dwell on words which the more I ponder over or hear repeated drive from my mind the æsthetic significance. Who wants Omar explained, least of all by music? This illustration must be looked on as merely typical of present-day composition, because Bantock is not a solitary example of those seeking to weld poetry and music without any definite knowledge of the underlying relation between these arts, or rather the forms of these arts. (From "Musical Standard," August 7, 1909.)

[A further article by Mr. Irvine appeared as follows:]

The objective definition of Programme Music was, that the form is determined by a conscious poetical thought in the mind of the composer, that of absolute music being determined by classical tradition, which later developed into the permanent sonata form. A subjective definition is far harder to reach because the programme which one hearer is responsible for realising, another repudiates, or is dead to. But a sincere subjective opinion is not absolutely valueless, and the more it is shared by others, the more it tends towards objectivity. The composer may have proceeded so unconsciously that the reading of a meaning into his work may thoroughly astonish him. This is by no means uncommon, even in dramatic poetry, but of absolute poetry one has never heard. Ibsen's "Brand" gave Bernard Shaw an idea which, if shared by others, objectively possesses validity proportionate to the number of people sharing it,

and Ibsen's silence on what "Brand" meant does not affect the issue in the least. Must the enjoyment of absolute music so entirely depend on the appreciation of the music *per se?* May no one realise even from the hearing of classical music a programmatic impression which neither the composer thought, nor the traditional form possibly accounts for? If one may, from where has the impression come? Although it cannot come from the form, and although the composer himself is wholly innocent of any programme, yet the impression is there, a subjective fact. Such a hearer's enjoyment is markedly enhanced by the perception of something not owing to the form of the music. Unquestionably in true programme music -music, that is to say, whose form has been determined by a definite poetical thought—the enjoyment is greatly enhanced by our conscious knowledge that the music actually means something, or illustrates an idea dear to us. It is no individual fancy here but a fact testified to by the subject-matter of the composition. In the case of distinctly absolute music, however, the programme and the superadded enjoyment may remain a purely individual affair, but even then it does not mean nothing. If what "Carmen Sylva" realised, as set forth in—I think - "The Nineteenth Century" of April, 1905, from a profound love for Bach's preludes is true- and true to her it surely must be then Hanslick's theory that the object of music is merely to be beautiful is insufficient in more than the obvious way. "Not to have an intention or a programme," so far as the composer is concerned, does not absolutely preclude the music from declaring a programme. What critic tells me that music generally lacks beauty the more it possesses a programme, when I can point not only to the composer who consciously forms beautiful music by a programme, but also to the sincere appreciator who draws a programme out of the most classical kind? Few people who think will be found to agree with Mr. Johnstone in considering Hanslick much of a philosophic writer on these matters. *One* out of the many objects of music it may well be to be beautiful, but if it is *the* object then many com-

positions must be very poor music though they are sublime, etc. The introduction to the dungeon scene of "Fidelio" is not beautiful, but it is not bad music and most distinctly programmatic. The idea that *the* object of music is to be beautiful is about as shallow as that *the* object of life is pleasure. Music's objective is the will and the emotion, and these afford it a much wider scope than the mere presentation of beauty. Music may impress us very definitely without its having been the conscious object of the composer to impress us so. The artist shoots an arrow in the air without aiming at this or that heart. Any man may hit a mark without his having previously and laboriously expounded his intention of hitting that mark. It is the individual who sets up the mark which the artist unconsciously hits. When Mr. Johnstone quotes Statham to the effect that: "The very object of music is to express something which cannot be expressed in any other way, "the answer is, that something has already been expressed *some other way*, and this novel way is only its artistic setting. Because we cannot see the object of music it does not follow we do not feel it. The impression made by the most classically formed music may find the vaguest reasoned response in the great majority, but, as in the case of "Carmen Sylva" and Bach's preludes, it is wonderful how the mind will shape such sounds to nature: just as wonderful indeed as that orthodox religious people will make out that heaven is a place where the streets are of gold, and God a man with a grey beard. When Statham says: "The best music of this class is that which is furthest removed from anything like imitative effort, and may be enjoyed purely for its own sake without a thought of any arbitrary meaning tacked on to it," then he is not only unphilosophic in speaking of enjoying an artistic thing for its own sake, but he stultifies his own case by qualifying his noun and employing a verb, so that I, who do not generally agree with him, do agree with him in this particular instance. Certainly let *us* avoid *tacking* any *arbitrary* meaning on to music, whether programmatic or absolute. Only,

that people will find some sort of a programme in very absolute music shows distinctly that this enjoying music for its own sake is pretty well synonymous with empty-headedness. I refuse to consider "Carmen Sylva's" programme of Bach's preludes as either arbitrary or tacked on. The lady was quite within her rights and the rights of music. If these are granted in such a case where the composer, so far as we know, was wholly innocent of the intention of evoking natural images, what is to be said of the genuineness of the programme attached to, or inspiring, the "Lohengrin" prelude. Does beauty go out there as programme comes in? Was it a case of even the composer tacking on its programme? No, simply it determined its form, and had a vestige of classical form crept in, then to that extent the beauty would have gone out and the pure impression disturbed.

What, then, is to be thought of such a sentence as the following in Mr. Johnstone's article. "I think it will be evident to any unprejudiced reader of Professor Niecks's work, upon a review of the whole field of which he treats, that even upon his own showing, in proportion to the definiteness or to the frequency of programmes is the weakness or the badness of the music; and conversely, in proportion as programmatic intentions are absent the tendency of music is rather towards what is beautiful. In other words, as programmes come in, music goes out." Later on Statham is quoted as saying that the most programmatic parts of Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony are "most distinctly not music." Had, however, here, Statham condescended to details, he would have given away his case altogether, unless indeed that little isolated instance of bird imitations counts for anything. Is Beethoven's "Coriolan" overture less beautiful than the "Weihe des Hauses"? The above most arbitrary dictum might, in presence of so much artificially concocted music of the day, have found some excuse had not Professor Niecks most wisely made Wagner pre-eminently the most powerful of the class of programmatic composers. Of course, on the other hand, Professor Niecks is

guilty of a contradiction in making Liszt the most important of all. It is not, however, this or that composer who decides the question, but simply genius. Since Professor Niecks includes Wagner, then the sting of what Mr. Johnstone quotes from Dannreuther is quite taken out: "Gradually poetical intentions took the lead, and composers began to accept relaxations of the laws of structure. After a time illustration became the ideal and symphonic music was transformed into programme music. At first the aim seemed to be freedom in matters of form only. But with this freedom the door was opened to sheer eccentricity and ugliness of theme." This is all, in its way, true enough when critically applied to individual cases, but by no manner of means does it do harm to Professor Niecks' general argument. Two ways lay open to him and he took the only right way. Either he could have championed absolute music at the expense of programmatic, in which case the modern tendency must be wrong (a thing it cannot be if its roots lie in so-called absolute music itself) and Wagner the greatest victim to eccentricty and ugliness of themes. Naturally, with the huge field open to him, Professor Niecks took the other way, and not barring Wagner practically showed that form and programme are at root only two words for the same thing. The factor that to outward or historical appearance differentiates them, is consciousness and the growth of the art towards romanticism. Bach at one end was an unconscious composer (not, of course, wholly so, else how could he have composed a "Christmas Oratorio"?), Wagner at the other a conscious one. In between lie all the others in whom the programmatic incitation is either a matter of degree, or a matter of occurrence. Mozart, in his sonatas, remains as strictly classical and absolute as is possible. In his operas, however, he was guided to compose by another form than classicalism. Which has given us the loveliest, most vital and popular of his music, the classical or the operatic form? The answer to this seems to me to decide the question, and no amount of eccentricity in later days can serve to convey

the balance of beauty in Mozart—all said and done of course —to the traditional form. Had Mozart's chamber music and sonatas possessed more beauty than his operatic, because he is the finest musician of all time, one might be inclined to think that as programme comes in music goes out. But since "Don Juan," "Figaro" and "The Magic Flute" are greater works than even the E flat, the G minor and the C major Symphonies, it may be taken that when inspired by a programme the music is inclined to be greater for the great majority of people.

Subsequent compositions of the greatest composers serve to demonstrate the greater superiority of programme inspired music over classical form inspired music. The victory was so pronounced and came to such a tremendous head in Wagner that no wonder a partial reaction took place in the case of Brahms, and may at present be taking place in the case of Reger. Compare the beauty and popularity of Brahms and Wagner and we get in two people a parallel somewhat similar to the absolute and operatic music of Mozart alone. Certainly Wagner could not have written a dozen bars of absolute music that would serve to recommend itself in the eyes of those who appreciate the sonatas, the chamber music and the symphonies of the great composers. Wagner, apart from his dramas, was a very indifferent composer, as those wretched extraneous marches prove. [Here, we are compelled to point out, our author is absolutely wrong! Wagner's numerous preludes, marches, "Siegfried Idyll," etc., are surely splendid examples of *free* composition. The music-dramas themselves frequently compel admiration in the same way. Richard Strauss himself has learnt much from Wagner's greatness as a *modern* composer. —Ed. "M. S."] The idiom of his operatic music too, is radically different from that of symphonic music.

The reason why so much modern music is eccentric and ugly is not that it is programmatic, but that the programme does not artistically become the determining form. Such poetical thought as is taken is very often unfit to give the music the form it needs, either because—as in the case of

"Omar"—the artistic impression is already exhausted in the poetry, or else the composer, on his part, has not genius. It is not that Bantock's music is tacked on to Omar, but that palpably Omar is tacked on to the music, literally tacked on in the most aggravating way possible. On the other hand, a poem like "Gerontius" admits at least of a lateral musical composition. Quite probably there are thousands of people who get from Newman's poetry all the artistic impression they will ever get, but certainly there are many others to whom Elgar has opened up the depths of its beauty. But who on earth, having delighted in Fitzgerald's poem, gets a bit more insight into it from Bantock's music, which of itself I do not judge at all? On the other hand, the "Lohengrin" Prelude is not mere lateral music. It is the poetical expression to whose beauty no words, let them be supplied by as gifted a poet as Tennyson, can enhance one whit. It is simply what music is, has been and always will be in the hands of a genius, the immaterial soul of a material form. Presumably from Statham Mr. Johnstone quotes: "Art *is* form." The obvious rejoinder is: then art is a frame, or a skeleton, or at the very best a piece of architecture! Art *needs* form, but that is the affair of the genius, not of the critic. *Art is content clothed in form, or inspired by form.* Professor Niecks's book shows the very opposite of what Mr. Johnstone asserts: "how feeble is the array on the programmatic side when compared with absolute music." The musician who abjures programme is the musician who will write for musicians, and they have always formed a very poor audience, and made as bad critics as critics have made bad judges of good music. For any sake leave genius to make its own way.

DAVID IRVINE.

August 14, 1909.

Mr. J. Alfred Johnstone's Rejoinder.

Sir,—In reference to the "reply" of Mr. David Irvine to an article of mine on the subject of instrumental programme music, I should like to say a word or two by way of rejoinder.

1. The primary difficulty in such a discussion as this is the definitions of the terms used. Arbitrary definitions framed simply for the purpose of developing an individual thesis or invented for the purpose of continuing a discussion are generally very little use to the general reader. In this particular case it would be quite easy to frame definitions of "programme music," or of "absolute music," which would include or exclude any given composers. But this course would neither enlighten the public nor clarify the points at issue. In my article on the subject I showed that the error of Professor Niecks was to make a definition which was so all-embracing that it simply confused the whole matter. Mr. Irvine falls into the error of making an arbitrary definition which sheds darkness rather than light. He calls absolute music, "that whose form is dictated by exclusively musical traditions." The meaning is not quite clear; but surely the form of all music must be the adaptation to its present purpose of an outline or form which has already been used. The architect, the greatest and most original architect, does not torture his imagination in order to devise a building which shall suggest to the amazed beholder a suddenly congealed dream of an irresponsible revolutionary; he crystalises into new forms of beauty fresh imaginations developed through a study of the forms of the past. So the work of every great composer is "dictated" partly by his knowledge of what has previously been accomplished; and partly by his sense of what is suited to the purpose which he has in hand. The contribution brought by knowledge of the past, may, if we choose, be clumsily and inadequately described as "dictated" by "exclusively musical traditions." The artist's own contribution may, with a similar propriety, be described as "always referred to some thought consciously present in the composer's mind." And so these arbitrary definitions may be applied as truly and as indifferently to "programme" music as to "absolute" music. They throw no light on the subject. No composer adheres exclusively to the forms and traditions of the past; and no composer can

be absolutely independent of those forms and traditions. Fresh doctrines are developed from older and more primitive beliefs; more highly complicated forms in music are evolved from the simpler forms of the past. There is a constant intermingling of fresh thought with the thought that has gone before. And therefore Mr. Irvine's arbitrary definition of each of the two classes of music under discussion is not exclusively applicable to either, but is generally more or less common to both.

The plan I adopted was to use the definitions which have been heretofore commonly accepted by writers on musical subjects in order to make clear the broad distinctions between music that is, on the one hand, self-contained, complete in itself, definite and clear in its significance, no matter from what source its inspiration was derived; and music, on the other hand, which is intended to be the equivalent of certain actions, events or thoughts, and which is translatable by the symbolism of words. Not for a moment did I contend that the imagination and emotions of a composer might not be powerfully stimulated by events, thoughts, impressions, experiences. On the contrary, every artist recognises this fact as one of enormous potency.

2. The whole conflict which exists on the subject arises from the mistake of confusing two separate and distinct symbolisms, the symbolism of musical notes and the symbolism of words. These are not interchangeable; but each is absolutely incapable of translation into terms of the other. As Mendelssohn explains: "My music is simply a piece of myself, nothing more. The language of music for me is far more definite and intelligible than the language of words. The music expresses to me exactly itself. If it were not complete and definite; if it could be expressed in words, I should give up composing." This is the gist of his reflections on the subject. Music is simply the expression of the experience of life, of personality, in a symbolism other than words. All this, of course, refers to what is commonly known as self-contained or "absolute" music. "Programme" music stamps itself as a failure, because it fails

to understand the object of musical symbolism at all. Its advocates regard music not as a symbolism which says clearly and completely what it has to say, but as an indefinite and interchangeable makeshift, which requires the help of words to make its meaning intelligible. This truth is found to be more convincing in proportion as music as a medium of expression seems natural to any given person.

3. With regard to the overtures of Wagner, Mr. Irvine fails to see the reason why they appear so strongly "programmatic" at first sight. This is the explanation: acquaintance with the opera suggests the plot and the words of the opera at once when the overture begins. And this association of word ideas becomes so strongly operative in the mind that it seems as if there were some essential relation between the two. To one who had never heard a word of the opera or a word about it, the music would suggest nothing but itself. It is absolute music except in so far as it is unconsciously associated with the plot and words with which we are familiar in conjunction with it. Even the scent of a rose will call to mind some scene or experience strongly associated with it. Nevertheless, we do not call the rose a "programme" flower; we do not regard its scent as translatable into these associated scenes. It is an "absolute" flower, complete and definite in itself.

4. The articles on "The True Significance of Absolute Music" and "The Factor of Personality in Music," will, I think, complete the presentation of my views on this interesting subject.

J. ALFRED JOHNSTONE.

September 8, 1909.

The second article by David Irvine, which appears on page 209 of this work, is answered by Mr. J. A. Johnstone in his contribution printed on page 229.

CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC PIANO-PLAYING.

A Reply by "Pan."

There was once a fox who was very fond of grapes. One day he came across a vine upon which was a fine bunch just out of his reach . . . .

IT is impossible to read Mr. Johnstone's articles without being reminded of this old story, and yet it is hard to restrain a feeling of intense envy for him. For what a happy man must he be who is so entirely self-satisfied! And yet, alas, there must be many who, like myself, are not quite in accord with him on all points. This must, no doubt, be merely lack of intelligence, and if Mr. Johnstone will favour us with a further article, clearing up the points I propose to raise, I am sure there will hereafter be no two opinions on the subject he has so ably and so admirably discussed.

In the first place he refers to "the days of long ago when the school of classic conservatism reigned almost undisputed. The greater part of the music to be played was rather formal than emotional . . . ." I may be wrong, but was this owing not to the higher plane of artistic understanding of the performers and composers, but to the fact that the spinet is hardly an emotional instrument. Has Mr. Johnstone ever tried to be emotional—no, no, I mean has he ever heard anyone else try to be emotional on a spinet? For the piano as we know it is quite a modern instrument, upon which it is impossible to know how Bach, Mozart,

Weber and others, who wrote for the early forms of piano, would have rendered their works. How are we to know that, if the early writers were less emotional, it may not have been because more emotion could not be wrung from their comparatively wretched instruments, however valiantly they were wrestled with?

Mr. Johnstone informs us that Chopin was among the emotional leaders who broke away from formal paths. A little later on, after admitting that the playing of Sir Charles Hallé (possibly one of Mr. Johnstone's masters at one time, that is to say if so illustrious a man needed any masters) was cold and fireless, he speaks of him as an almost perfect interpreter of Chopin, and adds: "What other pianist (than Hallé) has had his interpretations guaranteed as an exact exposition of the intentions of Chopin by the only absolute authority, Chopin himself?"

My dear Mr. Johnstone, in the first place if Chopin was so emotional as to break away from the formal paths, how can his works be well interpreted by one who you yourself admits lacked warmth and fire, and whose playing you quote as belonging to the school of classic conservatism which you say Chopin broke away from? And if Chopin broke away from formal paths is it likely he would expect other executants to keep to the "formal paths" where his own compositions were concerned?

And secondly, how do you account for the fact that so many of Chopin's pupils have claimed to reproduce his interpretations, although no two of them have rendered his works in the same way?

And further, have you never heard the story told by Christianowitsch, one of Chopin's pupils, of the muscular young man who, wanting Chopin to teach him, thought to please him by playing his Scherzo in C sharp minor as nearly as possible in the master's own way? "Very good, very good," was Chopin's comment. "But, my dear young man, *if I had your muscles how strongly I would play it!*"

O talented author of "Touch, Phrasing and Interpretation," does a composer never write works beyond his own

capabilities of interpretation? Surely this was obviously the case with Chopin, whose soul continually writhed in the bonds of that weak body and indifferent constitution, against which he so often hurled bitter invective. And surely we may recall Brahms as another example of the same kind? Do you not know that when he performed in public his first Concerto in D minor it was an utter and absolute failure, condemned by press and public alike, but that twelve years later, when interpreted by Eugen D'Albert, it was as phenomenal a success as it had before been a failure? And how about Tchaïkovsky, who never conducted his own works twice alike? And lastly, how about Sir Edward Elgar's great symphony? Elgar himself, Richter, Wood and Ronald have each conducted it, and each in turn has given a different interpretation, but the composer has had nothing but praise for the renderings of the others, though each differed from his own.

And, my dear Mr. Johnstone, when you speak of our musical notation, and gibe so bitterly at all those who do not follow the conceptions of composers as expressed by the annotations, do you not realise that no two players, even of the finicking school you so much admire, could possibly read these annotations exactly alike? And even if all pianists could and did do so, would it add to the beauty and interest of music if there were but one reading of every work? Lord Rosebery has made a great speech on the Budget recently, but how heartily sick of that speech we should all be if every political speaker repeated it exactly every time he wanted to talk about the Budget!

There is one point, dear Mr. Johnstone, where I must admit you score. "But even," you say, "if these romanticists choose to ground their claims to be great artists upon the crowds and the applause, how humiliating a place they must take when their audiences are pitted against the myriads who attend our football matches, our horse races, our boxing contests, our circuses!"

Alas, it is too true. But perhaps the romanticists are consoled when they think how much greater must be the

humiliation for those pianists *who have no crowd or applause at all!*

And how about the simile of the foreigner reciting Milton? My dear sir, this is unworthy even of you! If the romanticist corresponds to your "foreigner" then you would have us believe that he is "imperfectly acquainted with the construction and meaning" of music: that he is ignorant of rhythm and cadence, etc., and that he "obscures the structure" of the works he interprets.

Go to, go to, Mr. Johnstone! It is men of indifferent technique who "obscure the structure" of the works they play, and you yourself admit, while decrying it, the technical capabilities of these men.

Finally, you pooh pooh the idea that "crowds of hearers" and "thunders of applause" are weighty arguments for the merits of a performer. You say that it is the "thoughtful and critical few" (among whom must, of course, be included the illustrious author of "Touch, Phrasing, etc.") "which slowly acts as a steadying and corrective influence upon public taste . . . . and finally records a just and irreversible judgment."

It is, I am sure, impossible to knock you, dear Mr. Johnstone, off that perch of self-esteem which you so conspicuously adorn, but can you tell me why the "thoughtful and critical few," *in the face of public approval from the outset*, took twenty-five years to learn and admit that Carreño was a great artist; eighteen years to appreciate Eugen D'Albert; twelve years to acknowledge Busoni; fifteen years to admit the claims of Eugen Ysaye; nearly ten years to understand Nikisch; fifteen years to awaken to the greatness of Emil Sauer; twelve years . . . . but why proceed? In the face of this record, can you for a moment aver that the general public are guided by "the thoughtful and critical few?" Rubbish! Again and again the voice of public approval has been proved correct, while the "pet artists" of the "thoughtful and critical few" have almost without exception quickly disappeared from the field.

THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABSOLUTE MUSIC.

REFERRING to the above, S. O. G., in "The Violin and String World" of October 30, writes:

The article on "The True Significance of Absolute Music," by J. Alfred Johnstone, is of the deepest interest, and is, moreover, splendidly thought out. He says in the beginning of his article that music to the average amateur and to many professionals "is a concourse of sweet and pleasant sounds which fall soothingly upon the ears, but which have no effect beyond what is purely sensuous; which convey, not an impression, but only a fleeting sensation without power and without value. The real music of the world is something beyond this." How entirely true is this! Very few music lovers ever go deeper than the surface; hence the wild craving for melody, and the popularity of the threadbare tunes from Italian opera, which, although meaningless as a general rule, are yet captivating to the ear. Mr. Johnstone then refers to the school of philosophers that affirms the object of music to be to depict or portray something—and that this something can be translated into words. "According to their doctrine music tells a tale, and that tale might just as well be told in the more intelligible form of words. They say the composer meant to express the tale they tell; and that if he did not explain the matter, it is their duty to explain it, so that the hearers may know what it is all about." That this is so is not to be disputed, but it is not the less remarkable on that account. There is a

vital difference between music and speech. In the latter the words which go to form it are the symbols of ideas, and we constantly find that the people with the finest intellects have the most voluminous vocabularies. Music, on the other hand, is the ideal medium for the expression of those ideas which are too elusive for lingual expression, and the notes which are *its* symbols are consequently only capable of prompting the most abstract ideas. The verbs, nouns and other parts of speech which go to make language have exact meanings, with the exception of some abstract nouns. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the object of language is to convey ideas in a direct manner: music, on the contrary, is admirably adapted for the conveyance of ideas in an indirect or oblique manner, and when it attempts to be too realistic it falls short by reason of the great superiority of speech for the same purpose. It is comparatively easy to translate an idea from one language to another, but music, like colour, cannot possibly be realised without being heard, or at least without a view of the printed page. For example, the directness of speech precludes the possibility of *describing* a Beethoven symphony to one who has never heard it; the most that could be done would be to describe the emotions produced by it, and as these differ with the individual, the result would be most unsatisfactory. When a composer sets out to write a symphonic poem he frequently finds that in order to approximate the words he has to sacrifice formalism. Now formalism is one of the essential features of a successful piece of music, but it is different to the formalism of literature. In the latter contrast and climax are necessary, but shape is vaguer than in the other arts. Form in music appears to stand midway between that of sculpture or painting and literature; the symmetry which is essential to music not being wanted in literature, or, at least, not in prose. It is only by association that music can attempt to realise a programme—a battle may be suggested by much discord and a plentiful use of percussion, a landscape by an imitation of the shepherd's pipe and so on. But surely this is childish

in the extreme and a degradation of the art! As we said last month, there is an unholy craving for a story—the picture with a story is the one that is admired. The grand productions of the old masters are neglected for a newer sensation. The average person cannot perceive the art in a piece of classical music, but give him a composition which pretends to illustrate some footling piece of domesticity and he is happy. Nevertheless a symphonic poem may be a fine work of art, apart from what it is intended to represent. For example, Dukas's "L'Apprenti Sorcier" is splendidly humorous, and one could scarcely miss its meaning if even the programme was withheld. This is as it should be. Music must be beautiful in itself, or, as Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley said: "It must depend solely on itself for its effects, and in no wise require the aid of words, scenery, acting or any other extraneous condition."

PROGRAMME AND ABSOLUTE MUSIC.

To the Editor of "The Musical Standard."

SIR,—In "The Musical Standard" of Oct. 2 Mr. J. Alfred Johnstone had an article on "The True Significance of Absolute Music," in which he tells of some mythical he calls it "influential"—school of philosophers whose doctrine is that music tells a tale that might be told as well in the more intelligible form of words. Far be it from me to deny that such a school exists, but it would have helped us along considerably had Mr. Johnstone mentioned the names of some members of this extraordinary school. Never having heard of it, I take it for granted that it lives solely in the imagination of the man who, further on in the course of the article, tells us that in the days of Boccacio, Cervantes, Defoe, Fielding, Jane Austen, and of Greek literature and art, the best art was produced for the joy of bringing a beautiful thing into the world. "It has no object and no moral. It is beautiful; that is all"; whereon, with regard to Boccacio alone, probably Mr. Johnstone never heard of the story of "The Three Rings." Did Lessing appropriate the worst art? Why should a person make any further attempt to refute Mr. Johnstone? Shelley, who, of course, must come under Mr. Johnstone's band, said of Boccacio, "He often expresses things lightly, too, which have serious meanings of a very beautiful kind." Evidently, then, the meanings, not merely the form, can be beautiful in the eyes

of modern poets, who certainly have not written poetry without an ardent desire to disprove something, the beauty of the poetry not being impaired one whit thereby, but rather enhanced. In the issue of October 16 Mr. Johnstone has a reply to the first of my two articles of August 7 and 14. It is a courteous answer, but quite unreasonable. Mr. Johnstone goes on assumptions. He takes a form of music for granted. But that form has also to be historically accounted for, as somehow and at some time coming into existence. The mere existence, if the results are art, justifies both the classical and the romantic forms. "Surely," says Mr. Johnstone, "the form of all music must be the adaptation to its present purpose of an outline or form which has already been used." *Already been used!* Why not say "eternally" been used, and then a definite objection would be forthcoming against the employment of novel forms, whose "already been used" is also now their justification. The sonata form was only formed: it grew, was not given. Therefore when it was being formed, the classical Johnstones of the period would be objecting to it, on precisely the same grounds as Mr. J. Alfred Johnstone objects to programmatic form now.

Mr. Johnstone takes exception to arbitrary definitions, but all definition is in some degree arbitrary. No man will shed darkness if he keeps his argument within the bounds of his own definition. That is precisely *adaptation to its present purpose of form*. For my purpose, the definition of absolute form was that dictated by musical tradition, of programmatic, that of some poetical idea present to the composer's mind. Is not that good enough? Take a rigid sonata. Where did its form come from unless from tradition? Who invented it? Who is bound by it, if his genius has outgrown it? Mr. Johnstone says he employed definitions which had been accepted by writers to distinguish between music that is self-contained and music which is the equivalent of certain actions. Music expresses feelings, and is the equivalent of what it expresses. What roused me to answer Mr. Johnstone at all was the assertion that as pro-

gramme music comes in, beauty goes out. I assert that the beauty of music is not dependent on its classical form, that on its romantic we get beauty at least just as pronounced, and that the predilection for the beauty of one form over the other is an individual affair which never touches the root of the matter or is to interfere with genius. The proof of this is that we need not go to modern composers for instances. It is the classical composers themselves who composed on both lines, or under both inspirations. Consequently *they* refute Mr. Johnstone's assertion, none more indeed than Mendelssohn, although for me Mozart is the most celebrated example of a man finding inspiration in traditional form and in a poetical subject. Were I to assert that as absolute music comes in beauty goes out, the assertion would be as just as Mr. Johnstone's to the contrary. But no such thing is asserted. There is no law that apportions beauty to the one form and shuts it out from the other, of course in degree, for it is a vanishing quantity according to Mr. Johnstone, in proportion to the degree of programme, not an absolute line between the two. Why one person, on the whole, prefers programme to classical music is the individual's affair. The cause must not be referred to the form or to the music. This reference to the form is Mr. Johnstone's fault, for all his argument is contradicted by fact, not necessarily drawn from the most modern composers who may overdo the programmes, but from the classical composers themselves, who were just as liable to write music whose form was dictated to them by a poetical sentiment as not.

I must have one word with regard to what Mr. Johnstone says on Wagner's overtures. "This association of word ideas becomes so strongly operative in the mind that it seems as if there were some essential relation between the two. To one who had never heard a word of the opera, or a word about it, the music would suggest nothing but itself." Now, Mr. Johnstone, pray tell me: Does this apply to Wagner? Did the music to "Tannhäuser" suggest to him nothing but itself? Is there no essential rela-

tion between the music and the drama? Never mind me, or any hearer. Take the composer and his form, and answer the above question. Say at once and openly: the "Tannhäuser" music has no relation to the "Tannhäuser" drama. It is absolute music, and Wagner unconsciously associated it with words and plot, as indeed all his writings go to prove. Do first tell me that, Mr. Johnstone, and then we shall know your mind and await the proof.

As to the "absolute flower, complete and definite in itself" evidently Mr. Johnstone, when he means relative, employs the antithesis absolute. An absolute flower would be one existing by itself, independent of the air, of the soil, of moisture, having no spatial or temporal limitations. Is it of any use carrying on a discussion when a writer does not take the trouble to use language properly?

Yours truly,

October 23, 1909. DAVID IRVINE.

[*This letter should be read as answering David Irvine's article which appears on p. 209.*]

To the Editor of "The Musical Standard."

Sir, (1). I think that your contributor quite mistakes the scope and intention of my article. I wrote of "instrumental" programme music. Mr. Irvine makes an excursion chiefly into opera. No one would dream of disputing the fact that when you know the words of a song, and are accustomed to associate those words with the music, you will be reminded of the words when you hear the music. So with Mozart's operas, Wagner's operas, Beethoven's "Fidelio," Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," to all of which Mr. Irvine makes what appears to me quite an irrelevant appeal.

(2). "The idea that the object of music is to be beautiful

is about as shallow as that the object of life is pleasure." Possibly there is some esoteric joke hidden in this remark. If it is intended to be serious, I should ask Mr. Irvine to study the writings of "the greatest critic of all time," Goethe. This is his idea of beauty: "That inexpressible thing which we call beauty is a primeval phenomenon, the reflection of which is visible in a thousand different utterances of the creative mind, and is as various as Nature herself." And again, "*Beauty is at once the ultimate principle and the highest aim of art.*" Or were we to consult another genius on this subject, we shall find some unity of opinion. Here is Browning's dictum, which I have had occasion to quote already:

"If you get simple beauty and nought else
You get about the best thing God invents."

I am quite content to stand side by side with Goethe, Browning, Hanslick, Statham and such critics, "shallow" though they be. Mr. Irvine is welcome to the other side.

(3). "Enjoying music for its own sake is pretty well synonymous with empty-headedness." It is not easy to be sure, when reading Mr. Irvine, that the English language is intended to convey a definite meaning.

"Multaque tegens animae cernelur."

However, once more we shall presume that he means what he says. And then we shall proceed to apply to his remark the opinions of a few "empty-headed" people.

Mendelssohn says that when he composes a piece of music, he is "thinking of the music, and nothing else." He says he enjoyed it immensely "for its own sake": but he is "empty-headed." Schumann says: "If only there remain music, do not rack your brains" (for a meaning or an object) "but enjoy." But alas, he, too, was "empty-headed." It is hopeless to quote my philosophic friends, Hanslick and Statham, for they are ruled as quite outside the pale in empty-headedness by your contributor.

But is it at all needful to write further; surely Mr. Irvine's articles are their own severest critic!

Yours truly,

THE ATHENÆUM, MELBOURNE. J. ALFRED JOHNSTONE.

September 19, 1909.

[The above letter resulted in the following contribution from Mr. D. Irvine]:

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL STANDARD."

SIR,—In your editorial comment at the end of Mr. Johnstone's letter of last week you ask that this correspondence might end here. However, I hope you will allow me, not to continue certainly the argument that can't be done under the circumstances—but to show how irrelevantly Mr. Johnstone carries on a discussion, also to point a lamentable result of his curious assertiveness.

The editorial article of the last "Violin and String World" supplement commends Mr. Johnstone's article of October 2, "The True Significance of Absolute Music." It quotes a sentence, whose rightness is wholly contestable till reference, at any rate, is given. It is said that a school of philosophers exists according to whose doctrine: "Music tells a tale, and that tale might just as well be told in the more intelligible form of words," etc. The editorial article then commends this by saying: "This is not to be disputed," having previously asserted that Mr. Johnstone *refers* to said school. But he does no such thing as *refer* to it. He makes a loose statement, that I am firmly convinced any reference would disprove. Let us hear something about this mythical school and its chief philosopher, at any rate. It is really a pity to be misled by mere statements. Did any-

one commit himself to such a theory, he would not be a philosopher, and there would be no school.

As to Mr. Johnstone's further reply to me, this time to my article of August 14, what on earth has the drift of it got to do with the original matter at any point? The basis of the argument is shifted, my words are misrepresented, things are hurled at me as objections with which I have no quarrel, except perhaps on fine, critical, hair-splitting grounds.* There was very little in Mr. Johnstone's article of July 31 to show that he was confining himself to instrumental music, nor does it matter if he did so confine himself. The restriction does not better his assertion that "as programmes come in music goes out," or that on Professor Niecks's own showing, "in proportion to the definiteness or to the frequency of programmes is the weakness and badness of the music." And conversely, there is no connection between superior beauty and absence of programme. I content myself with saying there is no such rule as Mr. Johnstone thinks exists. One gathers from Mr. Johnstone that what he scorns in the programmes is what hearers read into music. He does not definitely question the point that in programme music the form is given to the composition by some poetical idea that has stimulated the composition. It is to this alone I allude, and therefore, so far as the composer is concerned—and surely that is the main point—I am clearly definite, rather too much so, it is to be feared, for Mr. Johnstone. The hearers may read into any music whatever programme they like. It is their own business and does neither affect my argument nor cause me trouble. It is rather interesting, in fact. I like to see music stimulate thought. When I take the trouble to be definite, then, Mr. Johnstone calls it an "irrelevant appeal." He then goes on to make some truly irrelevant statements himself, based upon a misconception of what I

* "Instrumental Programme Music: A Criticism."

said and upon mis-statements. I am sure out of mere desire for justice you will allow me to state the case for myself. Who generally would object to what is quoted from Goethe? Who would care to deny that "beauty is at once the ultimate principle and the highest aim of art"? I can also stand side by side with Browning, in so far. What is quoted from him confutes my argument in no respect. It is quite irrelevant. The question was, whether *the* object of music was exclusively to be beautiful, and I carefully italicised the "the" in order to show that music is not confined to the expression of beauty. Who will question this with all the dramatic music before him? No one; therefore drag in some side issue and accuse me of the irrelevancy which the accuser himself initiates! When Mr. Johnstone came to quote a remark of mine, which he proceeds to hold up to ridicule, he might as well have given himself the trouble to quote it accurately, and in its context. Having slain me to his solitary satisfaction on this head by misrepresentation, he proceeds to repeat the same offence on another. I commenced no sentence with: "Enjoying." This word occurs in the middle of a sentence with altogether a relative meaning, which scores a pretty strong point against Mr. Johnstone. Therefore distort it, and turn the successful thrust aside. It is not fair fencing, however. Then Mr. Johnstone tries to secure Mendelssohn by some verbal phrase as evidence against me. But I have no concern to deny the correctness of Mendelssohn's thinking only of music when he was composing. Ditto to Schumann's evidence. My argument remains quite unscathed. I can enjoy music for its own sake as well as anyone, and do not rack my brains ever or at all for meanings or objects. Where there are such, they come quite naturally from the music, and very beautifully. Where there are none there is no vacancy in the music. The form of the music has been altered from that of programme, that is all. I could give you luminous examples of music producing a programme in my head were this an article, not a defence and protest. As to racking my brain, quite on the contrary, it is very annoying to hear music laboured in the direction of ekeing

out poetry. It is disturbing to have overtures whose connection with some announced subject-matter is either a puzzle to me, or useless for the specific instance if some connection is not wholly absent. The difference between reading programmes into music, and a programme determining the form of a composition as it comes from its creator, is evidently beyond the grasp of Mr. Johnstone's mind. Yet this and nothing else was my point.

What, then, has this last rejoinder of Mr. Johnstone got to do with the refutation of the original argument in the article of July 31? I fail to see anything but evasion of my objections. The sense of that article I contest now as before, and only see that Mr. Johnstone goes from bad reasoning to worse when he comes to speak of the school of philosophers "whose doctrine," etc. It is just as sheer nonsense as the saying about art in the days of Boccacio being produced without an object and moral; being "beautiful, that is all." It is just as irrelevant as the saying that to those who never heard a word of Wagner's operas the music would suggest nothing but itself. How a thing suggests itself I don't understand, any more than how an animal could digest itself. In short, Mr. Johnstone does not know what the argument is about, and therefore discussion is futile with him. I wind up literally, WIND UP, *i.e.*, set to go- with the assertion—the only absolute music is that from whose form every trace of a poetical inspiration on the part of the composer is absent. When that is wholly wanting, the programme that any hearer may read into such a composition is his own affair; does me no harm, or the composer, but is often extremely interesting from the subjective point of view. Keep the two questions of how the composer is stimulated, and what the individual may conjure up when hearing, apart, and we may discuss reasonably. Confuse them, and there is no chance of reasonableness.

I am,

Yours truly,

October 30, 1909. DAVID IRVINE.

AN INVIDIOUS DISTINCTION.

By Hamilton Law.

A LARGE amount of space in the "Musical Standard" has lately been annexed by certain propagandists of the school of (so-called) "absolute" music. It has been suggested that, owing to the lengthy discussion ensuing upon these utterances, the matter should be allowed to drop: but as this article was almost in a state of completion when this suggestion was made, I am craving the indulgence of the powers that be to permit me to make my comment on what has gone before.

The aggressors in the war of words anent "Programme and Absolute Music" were Miss Mary Louisa White and Mr. J. Alfred Johnstone: each has written independently of the other, but the same enemy is common to both. And who are the enemy? Why, those miserable beings who will not hermetically seal themselves within the sheepfold of *so-called* "absolute" music; those unhappy wights who cannot subscribe to the tenets appertaining to those who uphold that music *per se* is the be-all and end-all of our art. It is once again a dishing-up of the old, stale controversy as to the respective merits of what is called "absolute" and "programme" music; surely there is room for both species. But whereas the stock of "absolute" music that can be termed great is exceedingly limited, there is a vast amount of "programme" music of monumental worth.

And this statement paves the way to my first fundamental belief: namely -*that almost all the works of the* MASTER

musicians are in the category of "programme" music. Not, perhaps, in the modern acceptation of the term, but insomuch as the germ from which the music springs has essentially some concrete foundation—a thought to be musically transmitted, a picture to be musically depicted. Otherwise the music would be *meaningless:* music having no significance might, and can be, very beautiful: but that which has some root idea behind it must be truer to life and to nature (providing always, that the music faithfully reflects the purpose or design of the master hand that develops it). I do not insist that it is absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind that music should be explained to them in the shape of pictures or stories, but I do maintain (and who can deny it?) that some sort of interpretation as to the composer's intention must inevitably benefit the hearers by tending to produce similar emotional feelings to those that have given birth to the work.

I would like to point out to Mr. Johnstone that almost all music has a tale to tell—*but usually only the composer himself can tell it.* The tale may be a very short or shadowy one; may, indeed, be little more than a vague impression: but it can be translated into some form of words all the same (I admit, of course, that all the languages of the world are not fully adequate to give complete expression to the impressions of some music). If the composer wishes to explain his music, let him do so. If he does not wish to—well, he is perfectly at liberty to keep us in ignorance and to leave us to do the guessing, *if we choose to do so;* but probably ninety-nine out of a hundred will be content (and no blame is attached to them) to listen to the music pure and simple, without bothering about the hidden meaning. Mr. Johnstone is inclined to be jocular on this point: he suggests some kind of a guessing competition; the latter would certainly be a source of amusement to those watching the game. Fancy Mr. Johnstone and Miss White being left in the final tie of a competition to discover the "hidden meaning" of Herr Watisit's great chord poem "X. Y. Z"! It would be screamingly funny—but I warrant neither com-

petitor would take the prize. But, of course, any serious experiments on these lines would be absurd, and could only prove the futility of man's imagination and invention. We have not yet reached the age of thought-transmission in and through music, although that day may come. Mr. Johnstone derides at the world for "always harping after an *object* and a *moral*." Of course it is. The world will always seek after an object where there is one to be found: and surely it is *meant* to be found; for what other reason is it there?

In support of the doctrines of (so-called) "absolute" music it was said that the great musicians "used the symbolism of music to interpret the ethereal moods of the soul. They recognised that its power was communicated, not through ideas, but by impressions (is there much difference between an 'idea' and an 'impression'?); that it was the imagination, the emotion, the personality of its creator in his finest moments, expressed beautifully through the medium of sound." Exactly! The idea or impression or *tale* is told in music through the imagination, the emotion, the *personality* of the musician. Mark well that word "personality." Another quotation: "But although the composer had no fixed intention as to an object or a moral in his mind when writing his music, beyond the intention of putting sound into a beautiful form, it does not follow at all that there is no virtue in the music beyond the sensuous beauty of the sound. In every great work of art there is expressed, how we cannot tell, something of the personality of its creator." The personality! And this personality *must be* "the tale I have to tell"! Personality *is* "programme" music! It is the personal impressions, feelings and actions that constitute "programme" music. "Absolute" music is—nay, must be—impersonal. And most of the greatest music being saturated with personality is conclusive proof that the supply of real "absolute" music is extremely limited. No, Mr. Johnstone, "absolute" music does not express "human personality at its finest moments": it does not express *anything at all.*

Miss White follows closely on Mr. Johnstone's track when she says: "Music should appeal to us as *music*. Otherwise it is not music." This is looking upon music as beautiful sound, and nothing more. The *personality* of the composer must not intrude. Again: "The spirit and atmosphere of things are giving place to actual realistic imitation." But this realism is no new phase, and I cannot see why it should be deemed an unworthy phase. An artist may not "revel in the noise of battle," Miss White, but the noise is there all the same; and I doubt if a *pianissimo* battle would sound very effective or be very illuminating.

Music almost invariably has some meaning: it is best that it should have. In vocal music the music is the expression in terms of sound of the words it is wedded to: in instrumental music the music is the expression in terms of sound of the impression or feeling or emotion it is wedded to. If it is unnecessary for the music in instrumental works to portray the mood which gave it birth, it follows that it would be equally unnecessary for the music in vocal works to illustrate the words to which it is allied—which, of course, is absurd.

Mr. Johnstone, however, is perfectly right when he says that the root-difficulty is the definitions of the terms used: and this has been mainly caused through the faulty definitions adduced by the "whole-hoggers" in support of (so-called) "absolute" music. These ardent adherents are constantly putting before us as examples of "absolute" music what are unquestionably works of the "programme" type, and thereby argue from false premises. I think these hide-bound definitions are unnecessary, but it is quite easy to frame one that is true of "absolute" music: it is that which is dependent on its own surface qualities to the exclusion of anything else. *Music that in any way or to any degree expresses the ideas, impressions, emotions or the personality of the composer must be "programme" music.* Mayhap this is a somewhat new aspect of the question, but I maintain that it is an essentially true one; and, at any rate, I cannot see that it is less conformable to fact than

any other musical definition (music not being an exact science). It is, I am assured, a definition that will not commend itself to those who advance the doctrines of (so-called) "absolute" music, as it undoubtedly cuts away the ground from under their feet. Many will say, no doubt, that this reasoning is absurd. They will ask me whether I dare to assert that, say, a Bach fugue is of "programme" type: and I will answer them that certainly I do. A Bach fugue is deeply tinged with the strong personality of the great John Sebastian, and therefore *must be* of that type. But a fugue written by Mr. John Smith on strictly academical lines for some university degree or other would probably—nay, almost inevitably—conform to "absolute" doctrines.

Mr. Johnstone's promised article on "The Factor of Personality in Music" will not, I fear, do much to enlighten us as it will probably deal with matters from the old mistaken standpoint. I said above that I have no love for these musical definitions. And I say again, in all earnestness and seriousness, that these arbitrary divisions into "absolute" and "programme" *are not wanted*—the terms are superfluous, meaningless, useless, and are a check upon progress. Why should some music be labelled one thing, other music another? All music comes from a common source—in the beginning of things primitive man gave expression to his feelings, desires, etc., in dance or in song ("programme" music, with a vengeance—if one *must* affix a ticket). Does it matter one jot, or is it of any consequence, how music is described, so long as it is *true* music? This quibbling over terms is destructive to art, and leads to the dissemination of views that are narrow and biassed.

What is music? Aye, there's the rub. Until someone comes who can give us a true and completely satisfying answer to that query—a definition incontrovertible—it is impossible to say whether this or that conforms to the art and science of music.

To the Editor of "The Musical Standard."

Sir,—Mr. Law's definition of absolute music assuredly gives us a novel aspect of the question as to what "absolute" music really is. According to Mr. Law, absolute music depends on its own surface qualities to the exclusion of anything else, and is manufactured music, pure and simple. As such, I should condemn all "absolute" music. In passing, however, let me say that I have never before come across expressions so inappropriate and outrageously inconsistent in connection with "absolute" music. But, to proceed, Mr. Law's definition does not in any way upset Mr. Johnstone's point or mine: it does not destroy the main point at issue—that the greatest music of all is that which, as music, is self-contained and beautiful, and appeals to us as music quite apart from any objective stimulus operating, it may be almost unconsciously, in the composer's mind. All good music certainly springs from a poetic source: all truly great musicians are poets in spirit, therefore it is impossible to sever good music from an inward poetic impulse. But who would say that the *creative* poetic faculty in a composer is equally stimulated or manifested in music that reflects the poetic ideas of other people, follows a given programme, has constant recourse to direct imitation and even descends, in some cases, to realistic interpretation, as it is in music which depends on the composer only for its poetry, and for all the noble and grand qualities it inherits.

That music which reveals a composer's intimate concern with the life of a people during a momentous crisis, although programmatic, ranks distinctly higher: because it is more closely concerned with real life; but even here, it all depends on the attitude of the composer towards that life, and the nobleness of his purpose acting as his incentive in creating his work, as to whether the work produced is a work of art.

So far I have never used the terms "absolute" or "pro-

grammatic," and although I agree with Mr. Johnstone in this particular, my point was, not whether programme music or absolute music ranked the higher, but to emphasise what seemed to me even more vital than discussing matters of title or classification, the artistic virtues and spiritual qualities which *all* music, to be good, must possess.

Mr. Law, in alluding to my statement "an artist does not revel in the noise of battle" adds—"but the noise is there." Where? In the artist's picture! I have never, so far, stood before a fine picture of a battle scene and heard the deafening roar of cannons thundering unceasingly in my ears. Artists have not yet sunk so low as to deem it necessary to have electric batteries fixed behind their canvasses, and a phonograph placed there to give forth the heart-rending cries of suffering men to add realism to their work! Who ever hinted at "a pianissimo battle?" These absurd remarks are utterly beside the point and are contemptibly paltry in such a discussion.

I protested against *noise*, not against legitimate tone power, and against seeking to make music responsible for interpreting things that are absolutely inartistic—against trivial, unpoetical, vulgar realism, mere effect and sensationalism in music.

Mr. Law seems himself to be "quibbling over mere terms" for he does not accept the terms employed by other writers on musical subjects and their definitions of the terms they employ as a means of helping him to grasp the writer's views. I do not suppose it really matters to Mr. Johnstone, and it certainly does not matter to me how the music is "ticketed": what seriously matters is that we should be rightly understood.

Will Mr. Law prove by correctly quoting from any of my contributions to "The Musical Standard," that I hold:

(a) "Music *per se* to be the be-all and end-all of our art."

(b) "Music to be beautiful sound—and nothing more."

(c) "That fullness of musical tone power is not permissible or artistic."

Anyone who has taken the trouble to read my contribu-

tions will, I am convinced, agree that these imputations are utterly false; and that they do me great injustice. It is almost impossible to believe that the spirit and meaning of what has really been said fails to be understood by those who wish to understand.

Yours very faithfully,

November 13, 1909. MARY LOUISA WHITE.

To the Editor of "The Musical Standard."

Sir,– Miss White's letter in your last issue is precisely the reply I anticipated, I foretold this answer in my article on this vexed question; I recognised the fact that my beliefs as to "absolute" music would be rated as "inappropriate" and "outrageously inconsistent." Inconsistent with what? Why, with the useless definitions used to bolster up *so-called* "absolute" music. What else could they be inconsistent with? One cannot but put the whole blame on the shoulders of those persons on both the opposing sides who invented these insensate definitions. In spite of all that your correspondent says I am as determined as ever that my statement on the question is no less conformable to fact than the machine-made definitions of the rival schools.

But Miss White is evidently no thorough-going devotee of the (so-called) "absolute" faith, but she finds a difficulty in reconciling her convictions and thereby falls between two stools. This is proved by her placing the two following remarks in juxtaposition: "The greatest music of all is that which, as music, is self-contained and beautiful" and "it is impossible to sever good music from an inward poetic impulse." These passages are, of course, contradictory, and therefore may be dismissed from consideration. I would only say that the second passage is undeniably true and is an unqualified confirmation of my views.

The point that Miss White brings forward with regard to the composer assimilating the poetic ideas of other people is easily dealt with Your correspondent has only to turn to

the consideration of any vocal music whatsoever—and she will find there whatever explanation she may be seeking. Really, these advocates of "absolute" music (so-called) are too amusing.

I am glad that Miss White has no use for the terms "absolute" and "programme": one only wishes that at the same time she would dispense with what those terms stand for. Every work of art must be judged from a different standpoint: it is not to be placed in this water-tight compartment or that. The division at present existing reminds me of the old nursery game called "Oranges or Lemons": each new work on its production is pounced upon by the party leaders and is confined to the group ranged under the one banner or the other—and then comes the wild and *destructive* tug-of-war. This never-ceasing controversy is like unto that game—childish, senseless and a paltry occupation for those who have reached man's estate.

My allusion to the noise of battle was based, I fear, on a misunderstanding. I took the word "artist" in its general sense and not as a painter of pictures, and I mistook the subsequent word "picture" to mean a musical portrayal. My remarks must certainly have appeared "absurd" and "contemptibly paltry" to Miss White if she thought I was referring to a painted canvas. But even under those conditions there is something to be said for my contention. I have always understood that the aim of all great painters is to make their pictures live: if one stands before a picture of a mighty battle surely it is the intention of the artist to make us *feel* that battle, to force us to lose all sense of our surroundings and to hear the tramp of the men and the roar of the cannon. Or are we to content ourselves solely with the masterly technique of the picture?

Miss White cannot understand my having the audacity to denounce the terms employed by other writers on musical matters. As regards "absolute" and "programme" music I most certainly do not accept the current terms, and I do not think that the subject can be reduced to any terms whatever—not, at any rate, with advantage.

Miss White confronts me with three quotations (Nos. 1 and 2 I am responsible for, but No. 3 I have failed to locate) and asks me to prove that she holds views in accordance with these statements. Here are the passages quoted:

(a) "Music *per se* to be the be-all and end-all of our art."

(b) "Music to be beautiful sound—and nothing more."

(c) "That fullness of musical tone power is not permissible or artistic."

Here are my proofs of Miss White's acquiescence in these sentiments:

(a) Miss White has herself affirmed in the first paragraph of her letter—where she says "the greatest music of all is that which, as music, is self-contained and beautiful, etc."

(b) is really synonymous with *(a)* and, therefore, the same words of Miss White will apply.

(c) To this my answer is that I never accused Miss White of such an assertion.

In conclusion I may add that I fully understand the spirit and meaning of what your correspondents have said. Their words are written in the spirit of dogma, and their meaning is an exaltation of all that is manufactured or machine-made and is lacking in any personal motive force. But this is bound to be the case so long as what I have called "invidious distinctions" exist. I repeat that the conventional aspect of this question is beset by serious objections which are calculated to stultify any attempt to consider our art from a truly catholic standpoint. The prevailing narrow outlook is to be entirely deprecated, and should be eradicated before the evil it brings in its train has time to do the incalculable harm that it has it in its power to do. I suppose it is useless to point out to the devotees of (so-called) "absolute" music that by the support of such tenets they are belittling their art. Undoubtedly they *are* doing so, for (to borrow a metaphor from poesy) they are extolling the grammar book at the expense of the poetic inspiration.

PARKSTONE.
November 15, 1909.

Yours faithfully,
HAMILTON LAW.